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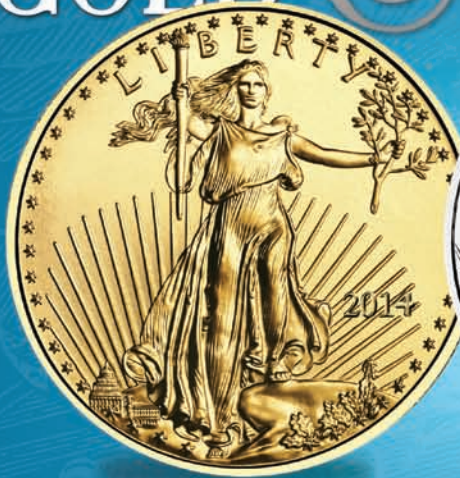
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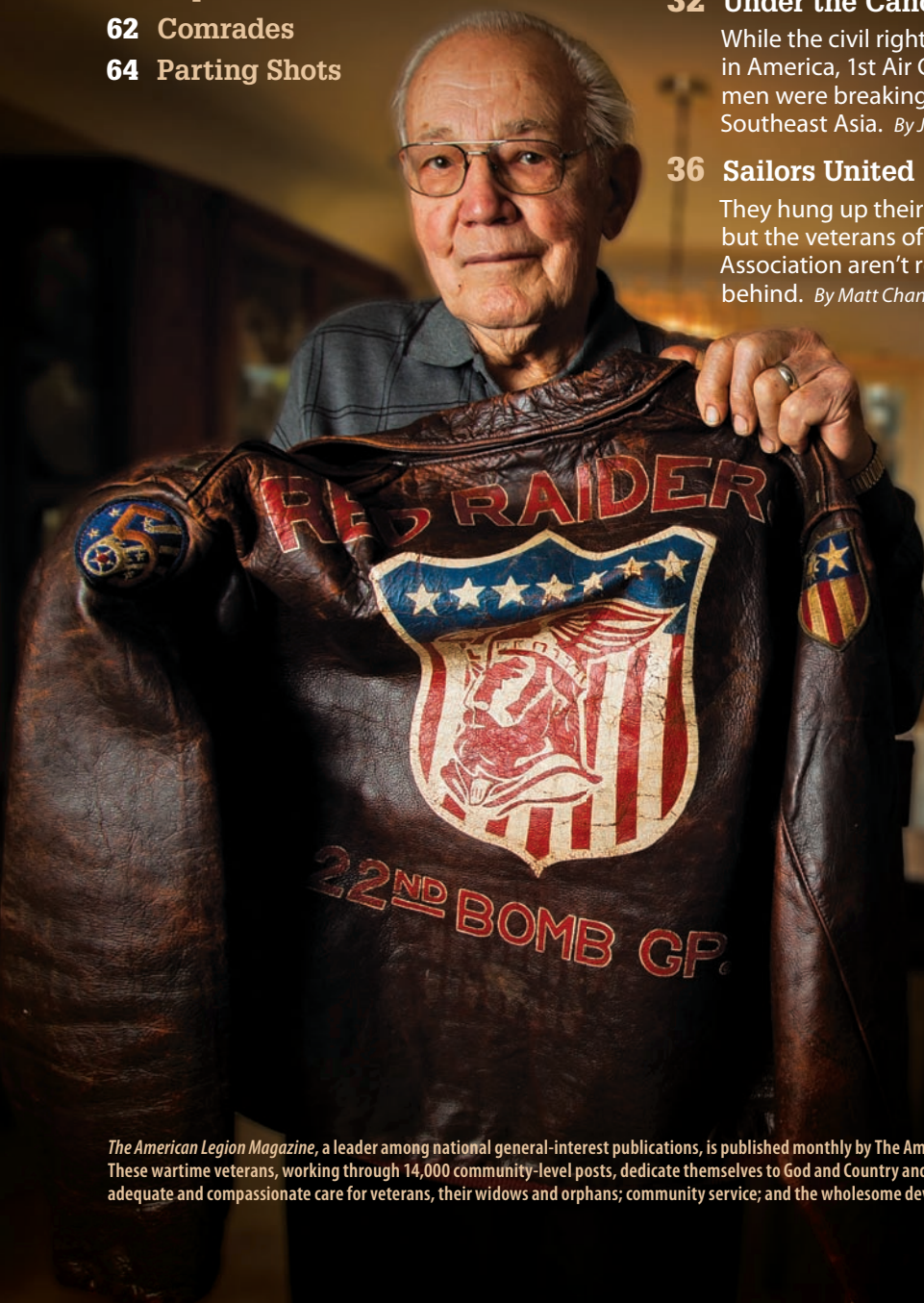
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They hung up their dress whites decades ago, but the veterans of the Tin Can Sailors Association aren't ready to leave their ships behind. *By Matt Chandler*



REUNITED AFTER 60 YEARS

Robert Arand, a pilot who flew with the 22nd Bomb Group's "Red Raiders" in the Pacific during World War II, shows off his leather bomber jacket in his Cincinnati home. Last year, a military history buff discovered the jacket at a Goodwill store in Virginia and set out to return it to its owner.

Photo by Lucas Carter

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The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.4 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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'The Wrong Side Won'

As a Vietnam War veteran, I agree completely with Uwe Siemon-Netto's article (December). Those like the press and the many protesters kept me in hibernation for almost 20 years. This account showed the brutality of those we fought once they came to power. There was nothing good or honorable about leaving the South Vietnamese to the communists of the North just because of Walter Cronkite's story about the Tet Offensive. We and our commanders knew that it was a decisive win.

There is a lot out there about it, including this great story. The problem is getting people other than Vietnam War veterans to read it.

— David J. Markham, Erie, Pa.

This article touched some sore points for me. I served in Da Nang and Saigon in 1965 and 1966. Last year, my wife and I spent three weeks in Vietnam visiting those places and the delta.

Shortly after returning from the war, I attended two funerals in uniform to honor fallen comrades. At each, a distraught mother asked me, "Is this war worth it?" I couldn't answer then, nor when I retired 20 years later. The difference was that in 1966 I was a young veteran, not yet exposed to the questions, vindictiveness and betrayal. Twenty years later, politicians, people and even the opposition turned tail and abandoned the issue.

Siemon-Netto closes with an abstract hope that our sacrifice will eventually bear fruit. I can testify that seven of the 10 Vietnamese we met in our three weeks visiting were warm and friendly. At least four made it clear that they were sorry the Americans left, and that they hope our countries can grow together – meaning side by side. Perhaps the author's hope is redeemed, at least in part.

— Peter E. Stevenson, Easley, S.C.



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I think the American public likes to forget about the Vietnam War. The U.S. press at the time did not properly inform the public and was completely biased. I spent my two-year service (as a German citizen) at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. I was lucky to not be sent to Vietnam, but I saw 50 percent of draftees sent to that hellhole.

— Klaus D. Marreck, Port Washington, N.Y.

We sponsored a Vietnamese refugee family in 1975, one of thousands that came to this country rather than live under communism. We were dismayed, and still are, at the many Americans who sympathize with the international Marxist movement.

Those who cheered at the communist victory over South Vietnam and spit in the faces of our military are now running this country. It sickens me that so many don't know the facts. We even import goods made by their slaves. I saw trousers for sale in our VA store tagged "Made in Vietnam."

I hope everyone reads this article. Thanks again, Vietnam veterans. God bless each one.

— John R. Chandler, Amarillo, Texas

'What My Life Has Been All About'

With regard to Mark Seavey's piece on Col. Oliver North (December), the proper title should have been "American Hero," regardless of what the colonel thinks. My father fought in the Pacific as a young Marine; I served in the Corps from 1965-1969, and my youngest son served in the 1990s. We revere warriors like North.

In the mid-1980s, I was toward the end of my career as an LAPD sergeant and was in charge of one of the department's vice units. North had been put on public trial and made out to be a traitor by lowlifes whose real intent was to disgrace yet another American icon – President Ronald Reagan – for his efforts in Iran-Contra.

In a desire to help, I contacted a fellow veteran and print-shop owner. He printed up thousands of bumper stickers expressing support for North. My vice officers and I took to the streets and strong-armed folks for a few dollars in exchange for a bumper sticker. In no time, the stickers were displayed all over the city of Los Angeles. We sent the money to a group of folks helping fight this disgusting attack on a true hero. I still have a few of those stickers, which I treasure along with pictures of John Wayne and my dad as a young Marine corporal on Okinawa in April 1945 – things most nonmilitary liberals will never understand.

I salute you, Col. North. You beat 'em, sir.

– D. Jeffrey Sheldon, Nevada City, Calif.

This is what I think of Oliver North: he took an oath to uphold the Constitution and did not do that. He circumvented that oath because he felt his mission was hindered by the Constitution. He attempted to be heroic by giving the appearance of falling on his sword for his commander, who also swore to uphold the Constitution and did not by his actions.

– Emmett B. Devlin, Boothwyn, Pa.

'The Longest Spring'

Alan W. Dowd's article (December) summarizes the situation in several countries, including Iran. But the assertion that Iran's nuclear energy program is a threat has been fabricated, mostly by the United States and Israel. Iran signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and has abided by it since. Its program is routinely monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and only minor technical violations have been reported and then corrected.

– Bill Buckel, Columbus, Ohio

This article presents a relatively accurate view of the Middle East's chronic instability. However, it fails to mention the role of the U.S. government in fostering that instability. It has sanctioned, bombed, invaded, occupied and/or changed regimes without a single declaration of war from Congress. Its 30-year push against Shia Iran (including involvement in Syria) is a destabilizing choosing of sides in a 1,400-year religious civil war, with ally Saudi Arabia as the premier Sunni state.

– Walter L. Adams Jr., Comfort, N.C.

VSOs protecting benefits

This was a good article by Tom Philpott (Veterans Update, December), but to state that most Americans blamed the shutdown on House Republicans is incorrect. That is the liberal point of view. Millions of other Americans, conservative voters, had the opposite viewpoint. They, along with some House members, were very concerned about the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare). That 2,000-plus-page bill, read by no representative in its entirety, was passed by the narrowest of margins and signed by the president. Defunding was the only way to stop its enactment. To prevent that, the Democrats were willing to shut down the government and did.

– Ken Wright, Oakland, Ore.

I am reminded of the town council that told the big-spending mayor he'd have to make do with a reduced budget. He replied, "If you cut my budget, I'll have to sell the fire engine."

The obvious solution is to get rid of the mayor and find one who will cut waste and spend prudently. The same is true at the national level. We need to get rid of an administration that would sacrifice necessary programs so it can continue wasting money through fraud, corruption and vote-buying.

– Tom Delahunty, Fayetteville, N.C.

Editor's note: The article "Young People Need Heroes" (December) referred to West Point Military Academy. The proper name is the U.S. Military Academy, in West Point, N.Y.

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Chaplains are the Legion's hands and feet

If you hang around an American Legion post long enough, you'll hear the tale of the Four Chaplains. It's one of those true and inspiring stories that should be told in every U.S. history class but isn't.

On Feb. 3, 1943, the Army transport ship *Dorchester* was torpedoed by a German U-boat while crossing the icy North Atlantic in a convoy. Of the 902 soldiers, merchant seamen and civilian workers aboard, only 230 were rescued. The fact that even that many survived is in part because of the level heads and steady hands of Lts. George Fox, Alexander Goode, Clark Poling and John Washington.

As *Dorchester* slid beneath the waves, the four Army chaplains calmed frightened men and led as many as they could to safety. When they ran out of life jackets, they gave away their own. Those swimming in the water and floating in rafts never forgot their last glimpse of the chaplains: all four – Methodist minister, Jewish rabbi, Reformed Church in America reverend and Roman Catholic priest – were linked arm in arm, praying and singing hymns as they went down with the ship.

In a way, they have achieved immortality. For a nation at war, the chaplains' triumph in the face of tragedy became an enduring example of faith, courage, selflessness and sacrificial love. In 1988, Congress designated Feb. 3 "Four Chaplains Day." But long before that, American Legion posts were commemorating the anniversary of *Dorchester's* sinking with ceremonies and memorial services, usually on the first Sunday in February. We encourage every one of our 14,000 posts to mark Four Chaplains Day in some manner – a short program, a longer service with a wreath-laying or candle-lighting, maybe even a breakfast or banquet that includes an empty table set for four. However your post chooses to mark Four Chaplains Day, it should be a community event – an interfaith gathering open to all races, religions and creeds. In the words of a prayer offered at many of these services, "May we remain faithful to the spirit of the four chaplains who, having learned to live and serve together, in death were not divided."

These observances are an integral part of the Legion's "Service to God and Country" program, carried out by our chaplains nationwide. Talk of one's religious duty isn't popular nowadays, and recent polls show that Americans' faith in God is declining. But the Legion won't abandon its support for religion's place in the public square. Our nation's founding fathers recognized God as the author of life and liberty. So did the veterans who founded The American Legion in the ashes of the bloodiest war the world had yet seen. Without God, they believed, there is no Americanism. We are nondenominational and nonsectarian, but we are not and never will be hostile to faith. We celebrate it.

Whether offering a prayer for wisdom at a post meeting or visiting an ill comrade in the hospital, Legion chaplains are the hands and feet of our organization. This month, as we honor the legacy of the Four Chaplains, let's acknowledge those among us who strive to meet the spiritual needs of the nation's military, veterans and their families. In a challenging time, they are willing and able to remind us all of our dependence on God, if we'll hear them.



National Commander
Daniel M. Dellinger

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WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

In March, The American Legion's 54th Washington Conference will bring hundreds of Legionnaires to Capitol Hill. Events include:

■ **Hiring Our Heroes Career Fair,** Washington Hilton, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. March 20

■ **Employment Workshop,** Washington Hilton, 10 a.m. to noon March 20

■ **"Know Before You Go" legislative briefing,** Washington Hilton, 4 p.m. March 24

■ **Commander's Call,** Washington Hilton, 8:30 a.m. March 25

■ **Business Development Workshop,** Washington Hilton, 9 a.m. March 25-26

■ **National Commander's Testimony,** Capitol Hill, 10 a.m. March 26

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"Anything can happen in The American Legion.

And the younger guys, the newer veterans, they don't want a stodgy old organization or what they perceive as something that doesn't do stuff, or maybe there are limitations. They want to see dynamic leadership, innovation and creativity. That mission inspired people to do more."

PETER TRZOP

As the commander of American Legion Post 121 in Bardstown, Ky., Peter "Dr. Pete" Trzop wanted to strengthen the Legion's standing in the community while improving its relationship with Bardstown's National Guard unit, 138 Charlie Battery.

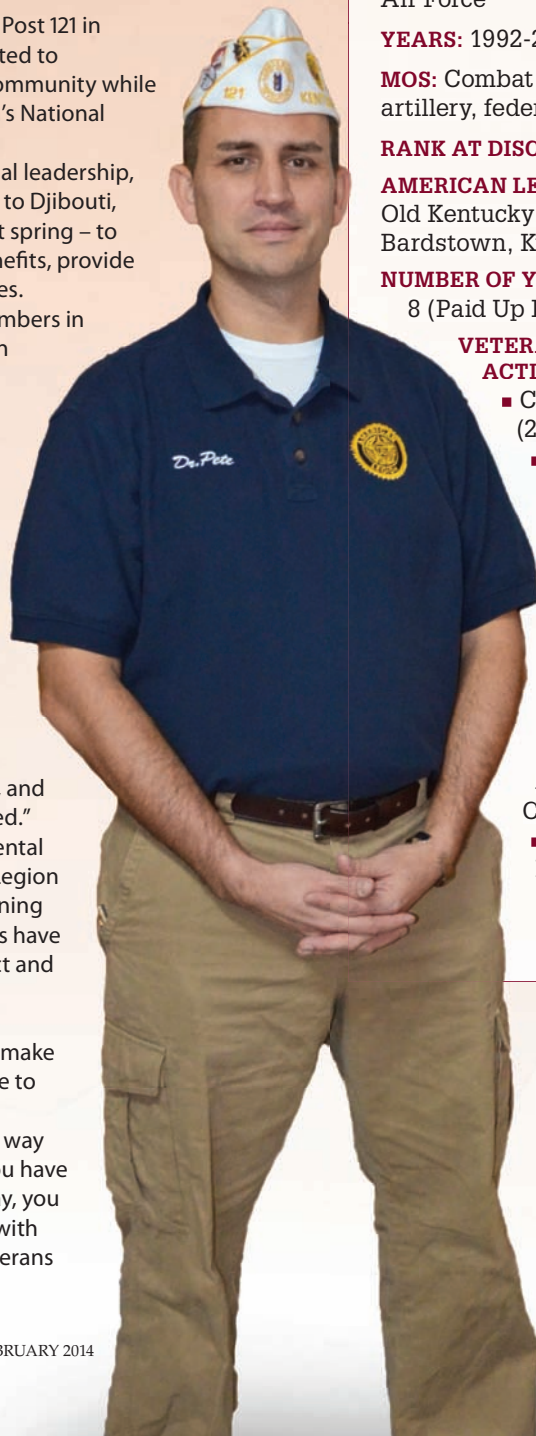
Armed with a doctorate in organizational leadership, Trzop put together and led a Legion team to Djibouti, Africa – where the 138th was stationed last spring – to educate troops about VA services and benefits, provide health resources and offer chaplain services.

The five-person team signed up 125 members in 14 different states, proving the power of an individual and of a local post. "If you can send a team over to a combat zone, you can do anything in The American Legion," Trzop says.

His military background gave him the leadership experience necessary to pull off the trip. He also credits Legion leadership, including past department commanders. "They said, 'You're the younger generation with all the energy. We're old school with all the knowledge. We'll show you how to do it (and) make it right.' It was nice to blend all those experiences together and go over there and cover what the soldiers wanted, and be flexible to deliver what else they needed."

Trzop's next project is an interdepartmental trip overseas, an idea he helped hatch at Legion College last fall. While a great deal of planning still needs to happen, several departments have already donated \$5,000 each to the project and even more have expressed interest in participating. Trzop knows that not every Legionnaire would be available or able to make such a journey. But he believes it's possible to make a difference in every community.

"Take what we did here and grow it any way you want," he says. "That doesn't mean you have to go overseas. If you plant the seeds today, you will have the trees tomorrow. If you work with and help veterans today, you will have veterans tomorrow who will help in the future."



BRANCH OF SERVICE: Army, Air Force

YEARS: 1992-2005

MOS: Combat engineer, combat artillery, federal agent

RANK AT DISCHARGE: Captain

AMERICAN LEGION POST
Old Kentucky Home Post 121, Bardstown, Ky.

NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE LEGION:
8 (Paid Up For Life member)

VETERANS ACTIVITIES

- Commander, Post 121 (2011-present)
- 4th District vice commander (2012)
- Department Legislative Affairs chairman (2013-present)
- Department Public Relations chairman (2013-present)
- Graduate, National American Legion College (2013)
- Executive director, Kentucky Boys State (2013-present)

Watch an interview with Peter Trzop online:

 www.legion.org/magazine

Photo by Derek Tow

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This watch doesn't do dainty. And neither do I. Call me old-fashioned, but I want my boots to be leather, my tires to be deep-tread monsters, and my steak thick and rare. Inspiration for a man's watch should come from things like fast cars, firefighters and power tools. And if you want to talk beauty, then let's discuss a 428 cubic inch V8.

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Employment Non-Discrimination Act



SUPPORT

Rep. Joseph Crowley, D-N.Y.

■ Crowley is vice chairman of the House Democratic Caucus.

Every day, millions of Americans walk into workplaces around the country knowing they could be fired simply because of their sexual orientation. It doesn't have to be this way.

In November, the Senate passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2013, which would put in place comprehensive protections to prevent workplace discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Americans. Enacting ENDA would be a historic step, both toward securing workplace protections for all LGBT Americans and for civil rights in this country.

Similar to laws that make it illegal to fire employees based on the color of their skin, the religion they practice or whether they served in our armed forces, ENDA ensures that LGBT Americans are extended the very rights and protections that speak to the core of our nation.

Our nation's military turned a corner when it ended the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which forced brave Americans out of uniform for no other reason than because of who they loved. The argument for overturning it was simple: sexual orientation makes no difference on the battlefield.

The same can be said about any U.S. workplace. Every American deserves the opportunity to work hard, provide for a family, and be judged on merit and his or her ability to do the job, without fear of being fired simply because of who they love.

The fate of this landmark legislation rests with the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Democrats in the House are ready to support this measure, but we need the Republican majority to schedule a vote. I would hope that ending discrimination against Americans is something members of both parties support.



OPPOSE

Rep. Joseph Pitts, R-Pa.

■ Pitts is chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee.

Fair treatment for all individuals in the workplace is a worthy goal, and the government should ensure that Americans' constitutional rights and liberties are protected while they are on the job. However, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2013 mandates special extraconstitutional rights based on sexual

orientation and gender identity. It would ultimately increase frivolous litigation, cost U.S. jobs, and continue the ongoing attack on religious freedom through coercive enforcement.

ENDA is a prime example of government overreach,

increasing the legal risks and costs associated with ending an employment relationship by opening businesses up to new types of lawsuits. Trial lawyers typically take these cases on a contingency basis, so employees face little to no financial downside from filing a weak or meritless suit. But businesses are out the attorney fees even if they win. This could have an outsize effect on small businesses that may have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees.

Unlike race and sex, sexual identity and orientation are not externally visible characteristics. Employers may not even know when they are risking liability for frivolous suits. In addition, the bill's religious freedom protection, covering only an extremely small subset of religious employers, is highly inadequate and vaguely defined. ENDA will punish people who hold beliefs taught by many religions.

No American should be discriminated against in the workplace or be an object of scorn, hatred or violence for any reason. While ENDA's intentions are to promote tolerance within one community, it promotes discrimination in others.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is designed to prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Critics say it is government overreach, threatening religious liberty and job creation.

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Debt and physical health

A 2013 study by Northwestern Medicine – part of Northwestern University – has found that high levels of debt are associated with a higher risk of hypertension and stroke, even for people in their 20s.

The research team studied the links between debt and physical and psychological health in 8,400 participants 24 to 32. Twenty percent said that even liquidating all their assets would leave them still in debt.

The study found a clinically significant increase in diastolic blood pressure, as well as a greater showing of stress and depressive symptoms. The latter has been indicated in previous studies, but this marks the first time physical outcomes have been examined.

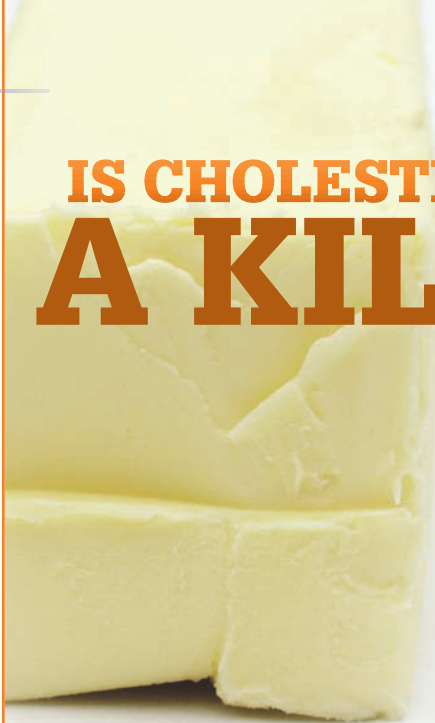
“You wouldn’t necessarily expect to see associations between debt and physical health in people who are so young,” says Elizabeth Sweet, the study’s lead author. “Our study is just a first peek at how debt may impact physical health.”



Media Bakery

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

IS CHOLESTEROL REALLY A KILLER?



BY MARTIN SAYERS

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in North America, claiming the lives of more than 600,000 people each year. Blame is usually laid at the door of cholesterol. Family doctors and health campaigners are constantly imploring older Americans to keep levels low by staying away from foods high in saturated fat. This has been received wisdom for more than 30 years, but is cholesterol really a killer?

In “The Great Cholesterol Myth,” best-selling author and nutritionist Jonny Bowden and metabolic cardiologist Stephen Sinatra paint a very different picture of the causes of heart disease. They assert that cholesterol is relatively harmless and is

actually a minor player in heart disease.

“Our argument is fairly simple,” Bowden says. “The book relates how we have been massively misled about the role of cholesterol in heart disease. Cholesterol is an absolutely essential molecule which is needed for your hormones, for vitamin D, for memory, thinking and immunity.” He adds that this “wrongheaded demonization of cholesterol” ignores the true roots of heart disease: inflammation, oxidative damage, stress and sugar.

“Blaming cholesterol for heart disease is like blaming firemen for the fire,” Bowden says. “It shows up at the scene of the crime, but it’s not the perpetrator. We are ... still subscribing to the way-past-its-expiration-date theory that cholesterol comes in ‘good’ and ‘bad’ versions.”

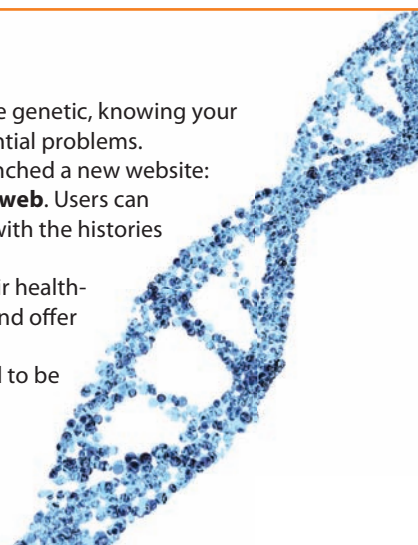
According to the book, though about half of all people hospitalized with heart disease have high cholesterol – seen as proof of its role in the condition – half do not. And half the people with elevated cholesterol have healthy hearts.

A picture of health

Given that many health conditions and risk factors are genetic, knowing your family’s health history can help you stay on top of potential problems.

To that end, the U.S. Surgeon General’s office has launched a new website: My Family Health Portrait, familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web. Users can enter their personal health history at no charge, along with the histories of their parents, siblings and other relatives.

After a profile is complete, users can share it with their health-care providers, who can watch for early warning signs and offer advice on how to reduce health risks. The U.S. Surgeon General’s office claims the site is private and is designed to be compatible with electronic health records (EHRs).



The authors believe that saturated fats may have some health benefits and that consuming too much sugar is far more of a danger. Meanwhile, cholesterol-lowering statins – given to millions of Americans with heart problems – are wildly overprescribed, their efficacy perpetuated by the influence of a \$30 billion-a-year industry.

However, not everyone is convinced of Bowden's and Sinatra's claims. Janet Brill is an expert in cardiovascular disease who has published three books on heart health. "Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in American men and women, and for me the information in this book is nothing more than pseudoscience," she says. "This book brazenly refutes decades

of sound scientific wisdom regarding cholesterol and heart disease."

The jury is out, but for now, at least, the advice from leading health organizations is that cholesterol is a contributing factor to heart disease, and that a diet low in saturated fat is a good way to ensure you keep your ticker healthy.

Martin Sayers is a freelance writer living in Cambridge, England. He specializes in health and nutrition issues.



Media Bakery

Father of 'Lorenzo's Oil' fame passes away

Eighty-year-old Augusto Odone died in Italy on Oct. 24. He was a former economist with the World Bank but is best known for his groundbreaking work to save his ill son.

Lorenzo Odone was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease, adrenoleukodystrophy (ALD), at 6 years old and given two years to live. Through self-teaching,

Augusto learned enough medical knowledge to combine various oils, such as olive and rapeseed, into an acid mix that was distilled, tested, and ultimately helped Lorenzo live to 30.

The oil is still used on children with the ALD gene today. The 1992 film "Lorenzo's Oil" told the Odone family's story.



Media Bakery

The scoop on sodium



The American Heart Association (AHA) wants Americans to know the truth about sodium.

MYTH: No sodium equals better health. Sodium is essential to good health, helping nerves and muscles function properly.

MYTH: Sea salt has less sodium than normal table salt. Table salt and sea salt are both about 40-percent sodium.



MYTH: Since I don't salt my food, I don't consume too much sodium.

Seventy-five percent of the sodium

Americans consume

comes from processed foods.

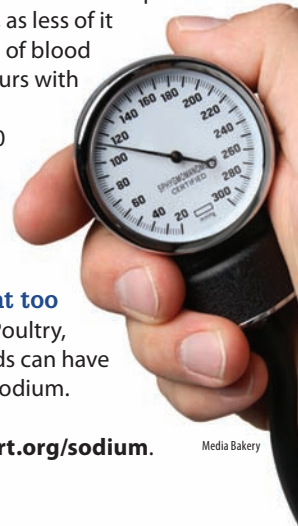
MYTH: High levels of sodium are found only in food. Some over-the-counter medicines contain high levels of sodium. Read the label to find out.

MYTH: Low-sodium food has no taste. Spices, herbs and citrus can add lots of flavor to food without adding sodium.

MYTH: Since my blood pressure is normal, I don't need to worry about my sodium intake. Even those with good blood pressure should keep an eye on sodium, as less of it can "blunt the rise of blood pressure" that occurs with aging. AHA recommends 1,500 mg of sodium daily.

MYTH: Since I don't eat salty foods, I don't eat too much sodium. Poultry, cheeses and breads can have high amounts of sodium.

Read more at heart.org/sodium.



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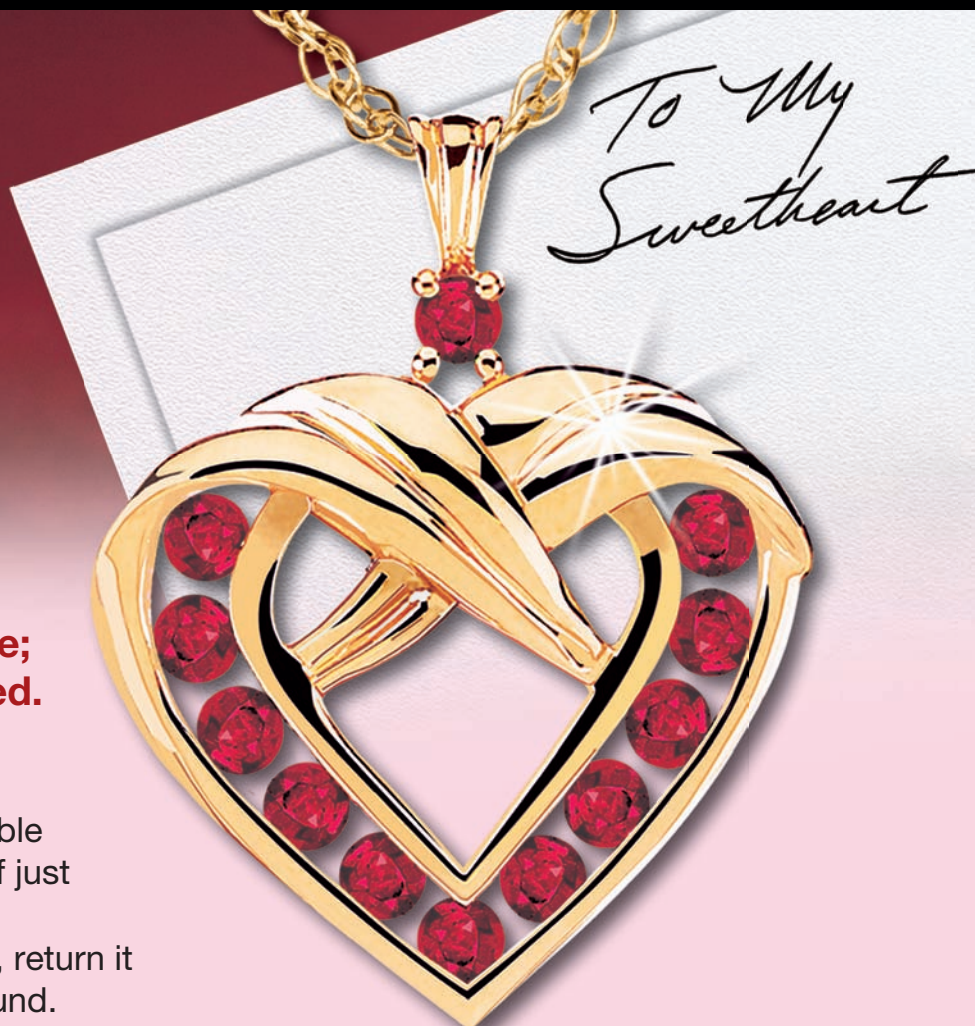
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Budget deal slams younger, future retirees

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Cheered on by military leaders worried about deteriorating force readiness, Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. – chairmen of the House and Senate budget committees – reached a deal Dec. 10 rolling back \$32 billion, or about one-third, of the automatic defense spending cuts set to take effect in 2014 and 2015.

The House and Senate approved the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. The 94 “no” votes in the House were split between conservatives opposed to easing sequestration cuts if not replaced with major entitlement reforms, and liberals angry that the deal failed to reauthorize a special extension of unemployment benefits.

Ignored during floor debate was a provision that makes the deepest cut ever in the value of military retirement for currently serving members as well as “working-age” retirees.

To save \$6.3 billion over 10 years, the deal ends full inflation protection for military retirees younger than 62 and future retirees. Those 62 and older will continue to receive annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) that match inflation, as measured by the government’s Consumer Price Index (CPI).

COLAs for younger retirees will be held 1 percentage point below inflation starting in January 2016. At 62, these retirees will see full COLAs restored and their retired pay readjusted as though full COLAs were paid all those years. But the loss in total retired pay from a CPI-minus-1-percent formula will be permanent and significant.

An E-7 retiring at 40 after 20 years would, by 62, lose on average \$83,000, assuming inflation of 3 percent and COLAs of 2 percent. The lifetime loss for an O-5 retiring at 42 after 20 years of service would be \$124,000.

Veterans groups and military associations, stunned to find retirement cuts in the budget deal, had little time to sway members to oppose it.

Only after the House vote did Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon, R-Calif., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, release a statement of concern “with the way military pensions are treated in this agreement.” By the time the Senate approved

the deal, 64-36, many Republicans voting “no” cited the COLA cap for their opposition. Even Democrats who voted “aye” promised to try to replace it over the next year, before it is set to take effect.

Critics noted that the CPI-minus-1-percent formula reneges on assurances by Congress in setting up the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission last year that any substantive change to retirement would be grandfathered for the current force. President Barack Obama and his defense secretaries also had

reiterated that changes in military retirement should affect only future generations of servicemembers. Yet both the president and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel issued statements in support of the budget deal.

Ryan and Murray initially congratulated themselves on taking a step toward reducing the deficit in a bipartisan way; easing across-the-board sequestration cuts to federal programs, including defense; and protecting their “core beliefs.” Ryan said the deal

included no tax increases and replaces arbitrary cuts of sequestration with “smart, targeted reforms.”

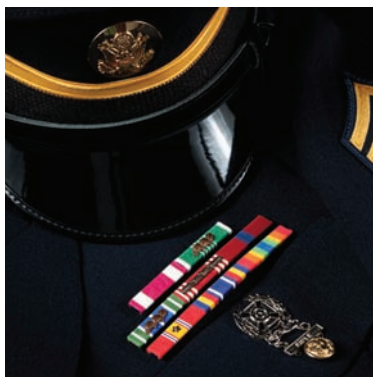
“For younger military retirees, we trim their cost-of-living adjustment just a bit,” explained a fact sheet Ryan’s committee released. “It’s a modest reform for working-age military retirees.”

Under pressure from veterans groups, Murray had stopped defending the COLA cap. “We can and we will look at other, hopefully better, ways to change this policy going forward,” she told the Politico website.

The Military Coalition, an umbrella group of more than 30 military associations and veterans groups, argued in a joint letter to congressional leaders that the deal must be modified to avoid “a devastating financial impact” on the current force and younger retirees.

American Legion National Commander Dan Dellinger vowed that the nation’s largest wartime veterans organization will fight to restore full COLA increases for military retirees.

Tom Philpott has written about military personnel and veterans issues for more than 30 years.



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Craftsmen commissioned specifically for the Tribute by the Foundation polish and decorate each pistol. Deep bas relief etchings, selectively plated with 24-Karat Gold, form the central panoply, with borders of strapped bamboo and dragons, the Asian symbol of power and protection. Historical inscriptions include the dates of the war and General Westmoreland's praise of all who served, along with the Republic of Vietnam Service Medal surmounted

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Traditionally black American Legion posts in Missouri, Illinois and Florida cherish their history and camaraderie.

BY STEVE B. BROOKS

Now in her 80s, Curtiss Wilson walks slowly and speaks the same way, with pauses between words, phrases and clauses. But don't mistake deliberation for an aging mind – Wilson is sharp as a tack. She remembers with great detail the roundabout courtship she had with her late husband, Clarence. When he visited her sister's house to call on Curtiss for the first time, she told her sister to send him away.

Her memory is also crystal clear about the important role Carmichael-Legree American Legion Post 167 played in East Tampa, Fla.'s black community decades ago. Clarence joined the post in the mid-1950s and maintained his membership until he passed away in 2002; Curtiss continues her decades-long membership in the Auxiliary membership to this day.



The post meant a lot to the black community, “especially those who lived on this side of town,” she says. “This was before integration. We had few places to hang out and be together. The post was one of them. This was all we had to call our own. It was a gathering place. Families used it to have their repass after the funeral, birthday parties, weddings. When families had nowhere to go ... they came to The American Legion.”

There are similar stories all over the country about traditionally black posts that served as important gathering places decades ago and remain relevant in their communities: Wayne Miner Post 149 in Kansas City, Mo., for example, and Dorie Miller Post 915 in Chicago. Their members share a deep pride in what the post has meant to local veterans and to the community in general.



Members of Wayne Miner Post 149 look over photos from World War I housed at the Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City, Mo. Chartered in 1920, the historically black post has been home to dozens of leaders in the city's black community for more than 90 years.

Photo by Steve B. Brooks

A LONG LIST OF FIRSTS Organized in September 1919 and chartered in 1920, Post 149 is named for U.S. Army Pvt. Wayne Miner, who served in the all-black 92nd Division in France during World War I. He was killed in action three hours before the war ended, and is believed to be one of the last U.S. soldiers to die in World War I.

Joe Mattox, Post 149's historian, says military service was a thorny issue in the black community in the early days of World War I. "(People felt) we haven't been treated as first-class citizens, so why should we join a fight ... across the world we're not involved in?" Mattox says.

But many did serve their country, making them eligible for membership in the newly formed American Legion. However, Legion departments had the final say in who could join, Mattox adds.

"The American Legion left it up to states to accept black veterans into the membership. "(The) 5th District of Missouri said they had no problem (with that). And the white American Legion here was gung-ho, so the black American Legion became gung-ho."

Among Post 149's founding members were Homer B. Roberts, the first black man to own an automobile dealership in Kansas City, and Carl Johnson, the first African-American to be elected as municipal court judge. From World War II, post member Leon Jordan was the first black detective in the Kansas City police department, and Tuskegee Airman Bruce R. Watkins Sr. was one of the first blacks elected to countywide office and to run for mayor of Kansas City. Col. Charles Gates, who served as a tank commander under Gen. George

Patton, was the first black to serve as a company commander of a Missouri National Guard unit.

"Many prominent leaders in Kansas City are, or were, members of The American Legion," Mattox says. "They came home (from the military) with some leadership abilities."

Decades later, Post 149 member Delbert White became the 5th District's first black commander. Another member, Edward Wilson, was the first black chief of the Kansas City Fire Department.

"When I originally came into The American Legion, I wish I would have come into this post," White says. "There's a reputation that this post earned and has continued to hold because of its membership and the things they do."

Post 149 continues to champion Legion programs, awarding thousands of dollars in scholarships, conducting Veterans Day ceremonies, providing funeral honors, sponsoring more than 100 Boys State participants through the years, and supporting Boy Scout units and local high school ROTC programs. The post has exceeded its membership goals five years in a row.

Post 149 was also one of the first veterans organizations in the area to elect a woman as post commander: Juanita Houston, the first black woman from Kansas City to enlist in the Navy. The 78-year-old Houston says she appreciates that Post 149 members are there for her.

"It's like a family," she says. "Over the period of time that I have had some serious illnesses, I've had several of the members keep up with me, made sure I was doing all right. They called me on their own. All I have to do is call one of the fellas."

A TWOFOLD MISSION Chartered in 1946, Dorie Miller Post 915 is named for the cook-turned-gunner hero at Pearl Harbor. Serving aboard USS *West Virginia* during the Japanese attack, Miller carried wounded shipmates to safety and went to the aid of Capt. Mervyn Sharp Bennion before Bennion – the ship's commander – died of his wounds. Miller then manned one of the ship's Browning .50-caliber anti-aircraft machine guns and is credited with shooting down several Japanese planes, earning him the Navy's Silver Cross.

Members of Post 915 believe the honors for Miller shouldn't stop there.

"Our No. 1 goal is to get Dorie Miller the Medal of Honor," says Gary Whyte, a past post commander. "We've been trying for four years."

"We want his family to see this honor bestowed upon him," adds Post Commander Willie Hodges Jr. "We're not giving up on getting this."

During its grass-roots campaign to award Miller the medal – including contacting members of state and U.S. legislatures, and succeeding in getting resolutions passed at The American Legion's national convention – Post 915 hasn't slowed in its other missions: providing Legion services and programs to its community. The post hosts back-to-school parties for local students, raises money for nursing scholarships, collaborates with other organizations to put on veterans career fairs, hosts a Veterans Day program and participates in Chicago Memorial Day activities.

The Post 915 family also conducts Boys and Girls State programs and sponsors local students in the Oratorical competition.

"It's about helping people," says Danny Eison, a past Post 915 commander who now serves as Illinois' 1st Division chaplain. "It starts with Americanism and Boys State. We get our young people involved. And we visit our sick comrades. We let them know we're thinking of them. And we never forget about the widow of a deceased veteran. It's about treating people with respect. We do that, and because of that, we're very well-known throughout our community."

Post 915 shared a home with a Veterans of Foreign Wars post until the late 1990s, when the VFW sold the facility. Since then, the post has met at the General Jones Armory on South Cottage Grove Avenue. The lack of a post home hasn't diminished the camaraderie of its members.

"I've always enjoyed being with the other fellas," says Vernon Coleman, a Navy veteran who joined the Legion 51 years ago. "I enjoy participating in the different activities we do, and I enjoyed being the post chaplain. It's just meant a lot to me to be a part of all this."

Among its former members, the post counts Elvin Carey, the Department of Illinois' first black commander; Eison was by Carey's side when he passed away in 2007. Also, Post 915 Adjutant Allen Kirkpatrick was the first black command sergeant major of the Illinois Army National Guard, part of a highly decorated military career.

"There's a lot of pride in this post's history," Hodges says. "We've all been lucky to have some great mentors here within the post."

That mentorship – and the strong reputation of the post in the black community and beyond – has made a difference in the lives of its members.

"This post opened up a lot of doors for me," says Eison, who's been involved with the Legion at the national level for nearly 35 years. "I'd had doors closed in my face in Alabama, in Georgia. It wasn't

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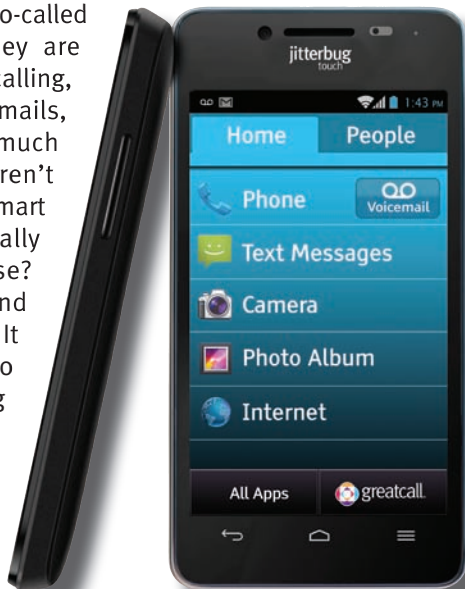
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Eunice Batts, left, Florida's District 15 commander and the commander of Carmichael-Legree Post 167 in Tampa multiple times, reminisces with Evangeline Best, an American Legion Auxiliary member.

Photo by Steve B. Brooks

that way here. Members here took me under their wings. I wouldn't be the person I am today without The American Legion and this post."

A POST YOU CAN COUNT ON Named for two Coast Guardsmen who died when USS *Tampa* was sunk during World War I, Carmichael-Legree Post 167 was originally sponsored by Post 5 in Tampa as an auxiliary unit before becoming chartered as its own post in 1946.

Johnnie Lee Campbell, 86, joined the Legion in the 1940s and transferred his membership to Post 167 a decade or so after it was chartered. A Coast Guard veteran, he was drawn to the Legion for its patriotism and has been active in the post for seven decades. He served as post commander three times and made history in the 1980s when he became District 15's first black commander.

"At the time, I really didn't think about it," Campbell says. "I thought about it as being the 15th District commander. After considering it, I tried to open the gates for other blacks to come through."

Eunice Batts, a 30-year Legionnaire, is following in Campbell's footsteps, serving as District 15's commander. She remembers sneaking into the office of Post 167's commander years ago to read American Legion literature and learn more about the organization. She went on to become post commander, and Batts' leadership helped Post 167

win the prestigious Wilson Timmons Memorial Award for the best all-around post in Florida.

Post 167 has strong ties to local schools and youth, distributing Thanksgiving boxes to needy families, giving educational toys to students and hosting Easter egg hunts. The post also sponsors American Legion Baseball teams and young men for Florida Boys State.

Members of Post 167 are heavily involved in local schools, frequently speaking at veterans programs. Evangeline Best, an Auxiliary Unit 167 member and longtime Hillsborough County Public Schools social worker, has worked hard to get Legionnaires into the schools.

"Any time I called upon them for anything and everything, they were there," Best says. "To let them tell their story ... was so important. Nobody really knew the truth about what happened to them in their military life."

Though the post lost its physical facility when Interstate 275 expanded, it's managed to keep a strong presence in Tampa. "I've seen great, great pride in what this post has been able to do and still does," Batts says. "The members really care for veterans, but they also care for their community. People know they can count on The American Legion in this community." 🌿

Steve B. Brooks is social media editor for The American Legion.

Rare African Emerald Find Shocks Colombian Cartel

U.S. jeweler seizes more than 10,000 carats and makes history by releasing the One-Carat Pride of Zambia Emerald Ring for UNDER \$100!

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA - A recent find of high quality emeralds in this African republic has thrown the luxury gem world into tumult. For hundreds of years, Colombians have controlled the high-end emerald market and sent prices soaring to over \$15,000 per carat for top graded stones. But the history-making discovery of Zambian emeralds has revealed a green gemstone with mesmerizing clarity that simply changes everything.

This important find led Stauer, a major gem dealer and importer, to bid on over 10,000 carats. Stauer designed a classic 1-ctw ring for people who love the gem but don't love outrageously priced luxury. Because of their timely buy, Stauer is releasing this exclusive, natural emerald ring—aka *"The Pride of Zambia"*—to the public for under \$100!

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THE FACE OF AMERICA

The four giants of Mount Rushmore tell our nation's grand story.

BY ALAN W. DOWD

The idea for Mount Rushmore was conceived in 1924, when South Dakota's state historian contacted sculptor Gutzon Borglum about creating a sculpture out of a rock formation in the Black Hills. Borglum liked the idea and proposed that former presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln serve as the main subjects for the massive mountainside sculpture. That initial idea grew to include Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt.

Mount Rushmore is many things – monument, memorial, landmark – but the towering sculpture of those towering leaders also reflects something more. As Borglum put it, Mount Rushmore “bears witness, carries the likeness, the dates, a word or two of the great things we accomplished as a nation.”



Corbis

FOUR GIANTS Washington was more than just a president. He was a warrior, his silhouette reminding us that our liberty and independence come at a price – and that the best way to avoid paying that price in blood is to pay it in preparedness. “There is nothing so likely to produce peace,” he counseled, “as to be well prepared to meet an enemy.”

Washington also represents the birth of what he called a “nascent empire” – a global power. Yet his stoic gaze warns against “entanglements” with foreign lands, providing a constant reminder that America is exceptional. As he put it, “Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course” than the Old World.

Washington himself pursued a different course. So revered was he that he could have been president for life or some sort of benign military monarch. If anyone was bigger than the republic, it was Washington, the father of our country. But his actions made it clear to his successors that no president is bigger than the republic. He resisted the temptation to amass personal power and bowed to the rule of law, setting crucial precedents on executive power, time in office and civilian control over the military.

Jefferson represents America’s founding document, the Declaration of Independence, which declared to the world that “all men are created equal” and endowed by God with a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of what each defines as happiness. Jefferson’s masterpiece was more than America’s birth certificate, more than an announcement that the New World was ready to govern itself. It was the flame that lit the furnace of what he called “an empire of liberty.” Indeed, Jefferson’s assertive foreign policy expanded America westward, defended U.S. interests on the far side of the world, and made it clear to friend and foe alike that America would fight for its rightful place among the nations.

Just as Washington set lasting precedents in how he left office, Jefferson set them in how he entered office. His election marked the nation’s first transfer of power from one party to another. It was a peaceful transfer, yet that was anything but inevitable. The election was bitterly fought, and the outcome was uncertain for weeks. During the long stalemate, there was talk among Jefferson’s opponents of transferring presidential authority to a Senate designee or leaving the office vacant. There were even fears of civil unrest.

But Jefferson patiently waited for the system to work. After dozens of ballots, a majority of House delegations chose him to lead the nation.

“We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists,” he said poignantly in his inaugural address, thus laying the foundation for a political system where winners are not coronated like kings and losers are not treated like defeated enemies.

More than half a century would pass before the promise of Jefferson’s masterpiece was fulfilled.

Lincoln initially focused on preserving the Union – as he famously explained in 1862, “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it” – but somewhere between Bull Run and Appomattox, Lincoln realized that saving the Union required America to extirpate the original sin of slavery.

“If God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword,” he declared during his second inaugural, driving home his point and his own transformation by quoting Psalm 19: “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

In abolishing slavery, Lincoln finished what was left undone at the founding. In laying out his vision for postwar peace, Lincoln reminded us of our responsibilities to those who fight and die for America: “to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan.” And in preserving the Union, Lincoln transformed America from a collection of independent states into one nation – the “last, best hope of earth.”

Finally, Roosevelt embodies America’s entry on the world stage as a force for good. By building the Panama Canal, he connected east and west. By forging a truly global Navy, he wielded a “big stick” that projected U.S. power and deterred America’s enemies.

Indeed, his policies provide a timeless example of how to deter war by being fully prepared to wage it. “We infinitely desire peace,” Roosevelt declared, echoing Washington. “And the surest way of obtaining it is to show that we are not afraid of war.”

ROOM FOR MORE?

Polling conducted in 2009 revealed that:

29 percent of Americans would add John F. Kennedy

20 percent would add Ronald Reagan

18 percent would add Franklin D. Roosevelt

Sources: “60 Minutes,” *Vanity Fair*

Roosevelt also taught his successors that global leadership demands more than pursuing simple self-interest, that in becoming a great power the United States should not stop being a good neighbor. So he challenged America to resist “coldblooded indifference to the misery of the oppressed.” Even when “our own interests are not greatly involved,” he declared, there are times to act “in the interest of humanity at large.”

Roosevelt’s was the last visage completed. The monument was dedicated just weeks before Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor – a symbolic parenthesis to America’s time of inward-looking isolation.

HEADROOM? To the novice, there appears to be plenty of room for more super-sized sculptures to the right of Lincoln. But National Park Service officials note that Borglum’s son, who completed the project, concluded that the elder Borglum’s design exhausted the carveable rock. Moreover, geoenigneers are unsure how new excavations would affect the existing sculpture.

Geology aside, the nature of the monument – four U.S. leaders representing four distinct eras of U.S. history – has always invited discussion about who else belongs on Mount Rushmore. Polls suggest that Americans are open to the idea of adding another face or two. Whether or not Congress ever moves in that direction, it’s an interesting thought experiment.

If the geological limitations could be overcome, the political limitations are certainly bridgeable. One can imagine a bipartisan compromise where-by a Democrat and a Republican are added.

A strong case could be made for two very different leaders: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. One expanded and wielded the powers of government to fight the Great Depression. The other declared, “Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.”

Yet despite their philosophical differences, they had much in common. Both believed deeply in U.S. exceptionalism. Both were optimists and principled pragmatists, skilled politicians and media maestros. And both used these traits to rouse America from periods of self-doubt, rally the country against existential threats, defeat brutal enemy regimes and help it achieve aims arguably as consequential as those achieved by the four men immortalized on Mount Rushmore.

DEMOCRACY’S DEFENDER Love him as the man who ended the Great Depression and gave every ounce of himself to defeat the enemies of



THE FACES, BY THE NUMBERS

Each face is some **six** stories high.

Each eye is **11** feet wide.

Each nose is **20** feet long.

Taken to scale, each carving would equate to a **465**-foot tall person.

Some **500,000** tons of rock were dynamited away to carve the monument.

The head of Washington was finished in **1930**, Jefferson in **1936**, Lincoln in **1937** and Roosevelt in **1939**.

Sources: Calvin Lawrence/ABC News/Bill Lucey

democracy, or hate him as the man who created the modern welfare state and called Josef Stalin “Uncle Joe,” it’s difficult to describe FDR as anything less than a towering historical figure.

At home, FDR launched programs aimed at reversing the Great Depression, getting America back to work, creating a safety net for tough times and laying the foundation for economic progress – everything from emergency programs like the Bank Holiday, Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and other agencies to enduring programs like the Social Security Administration and Tennessee Valley Authority.

Crucially, FDR’s efforts stabilized the country’s political-economic infrastructure. “It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who gave hope to a nation that was in distress and could have slid into dictatorship,” Newt Gingrich once observed.

Indeed, Americans approved of Roosevelt’s unprecedented government expansion and intervention, as evidenced by his victories in four presidential elections.

Overseas, FDR built the great arsenal of democracy, walked the United States back onto the international stage and steered it to a position of unmatched geopolitical power. He envisioned a

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Cost: \$989,992.32 (about \$16,150,998 today), 85 percent of it paid for by federal monies

Erosion rate: One inch every 10,000 years

Sources: Mount Rushmore National Memorial, PBS' "American Experience," Bill Lucey

postwar world founded on freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. And along with another giant of World War II, Winston Churchill, he crafted the Atlantic Charter, the principles of which still underpin the international system.

FREEDOM'S FIGHTER The economic crisis America faced in 1980 – double-digit inflation, double-digit unemployment, double-digit interest rates – was compounded by what then-President Jimmy Carter called an “erosion of our confidence,” a sense that the country was in the midst of irreversible decline.

Ever the optimist, Reagan believed that America's greatest days were yet to come. The key, in his view, was reviving the economy by cutting nondefense spending, eliminating unnecessary regulation, revamping the tax code and unshackling America's free-enterprise system.

The formula worked, as the nation enjoyed an unbroken 92-month stretch of economic expansion, an 18-percent increase in disposable income and a halving of unemployment.

With the economy reawakened, Reagan had the resources to outspend, outbuild, outmaneuver and

outlast the Soviet empire. He challenged Americans to think of the Cold War not as a permanent condition to be managed but as a struggle between freedom and tyranny – one that could be won.

“The West will not contain communism,” he promised in 1981. “It will transcend communism ... a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written.”

Toward that end, he put a halt to the moral relativism and accommodation that had set in after a decade of detente. Reagan rebuilt a demoralized military, armed anti-communist rebels, rolled back Soviet expansionism, challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet state and used rhetoric like a weapon: “Beware the temptation of ... blithely declaring yourselves above it all and labeling both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire.”

By the end of Reagan's presidency, the Cold War had melted away. Nine months later, the Berlin Wall was gone, the Soviet empire was in retreat, and America had gone from a nation in decline into an economic-military-cultural colossus without historical parallel or geopolitical peer.

As President Barack Obama observes, “Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America.” That may explain why, for almost two decades, bills have been introduced in Congress to add Reagan's face to Mount Rushmore.

BUILT TO LAST There is more to this discussion than politics or geology, of course. Perhaps the real question is a philosophical one: is Mount Rushmore a finished product or a work in progress?

Paul Menard of the National Park Service says his agency considers it “a completed work of art.” Writer Ronald Fraser, who advocates adding FDR, counters that the monument is “a running chronicle of the American experience.”

Whether or not anything is ever added to Rushmore, nature won't take anything away from it for a very long time. Geologists estimate that its erosion rate is barely an inch every 10,000 years.

That's a powerful metaphor for the timeless truths these men stood for – and very much in keeping with Borglum's hopes. “Let us place there,” he wrote, “as close to heaven as we can, the words of our leaders, their faces, to show posterity what manner of men they were. Then breathe a prayer that these records will endure until the wind and rain alone shall wear them away.” 🌿

Alan W. Dowd is a contributing editor for The American Legion Magazine.



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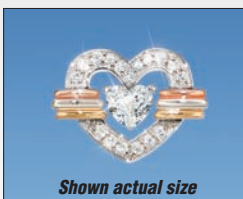
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UNDER THE CANOPY

While the civil rights movement was happening in America, 1st Air Cav Sgt. Fred Steen and his men were breaking barriers of their own in Southeast Asia.

BY JEFF STOFFER

Fred Steen's combat tours are etched in his soul. Recollections of fighting the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong guerrillas in the valleys, jungles and flatlands of Southeast Asia with the 1st Air Cavalry are vivid: stifling subtropical heat, poisonous snakes, bloodsucking leeches, a crafty and vicious enemy, and the mental strain of "old Death," as Steen calls it – always present, always threatening to send a comrade home in a body bag or rain down on an enemy bunker.

The scenes, screams and odors of jungle warfare remain fresh in the mind of Steen, now 82 and living in Germany with wife Heidi, where he spent much of his noncombat military career. Since retiring from the Army after than 30 years in, Steen has written two books about his Vietnam War experiences, one of which is a novel classified as fiction only because he changed some names, dates and locations, he says.

His prose in "Black Knight Alfa: The Most



A soldier in the U.S. Army 1st Air Cavalry holds his rifle above his head as he serves as a "traffic cop" for helicopters landing in a field during an operation north of Saigon in the Vietnam War. Getty

Feared Infantry Company,” is not so much about battle plans and execution, nor does it contain stereotypes of disillusionment among U.S. troops, as do so many accounts of the war. It’s about an attitude of confidence, discipline, pride and success among smart, well-trained soldiers of multiple races fighting a common enemy in unfamiliar territory. Steen’s stories illustrate U.S. battlefield victories in a war he says “the NVA and the Cong did not win. The American soldiers sure as hell did not lose that war.”

An older noncommissioned officer at the time he was deployed to Vietnam, Sgt. 1st Class Steen was known as “Top” among the younger men, who included some of his officers. He had entered the Illinois Army National Guard several years earlier, in the twilight of military segregation, and fondly remembers singing “Jodie” with other black soldiers in a training environment that was far from colorblind. In the regular Army, he says, he pulled KP even though he was a sergeant. Combat in the Vietnam War, Steen explains in “Black Knight Alfa,” did much to change perceptions:

We had to stick together or old Charlie would be more than happy to hang us separately. Our common goal was to live, and we had a common group of enemies who were trying their best to kill us. Out there in the bush, old Death made us either brothers or dead bodies ... We were all soldiers – white soldiers, black soldiers, brown soldiers, red soldiers. The binding word is soldier.

Steen’s tours included combat leadership of a LRRP (long-range reconnaissance patrol) team that penetrated deep into enemy-occupied regions early in the war. Later, as a platoon sergeant, he learned to convert fear among his men and within himself into a resolve to beat the enemy at his own game. He remembers those men with respect and gratitude he frequently expresses in his book:

When any of my men hurt, I hurt. When one of them died, I died. We walked through hell together, and I would do it again and again if necessary. May God bless them all, wherever they are today.

More than 40 years have passed since Steen came eyeball to eyeball with the enemy he refers to only by nickname, but his opinion of North Vietnamese forces remains the same as it was when he was in theater. “My thoughts of Charlie then and now are unprintable,” he said in a recent interview with *The American Legion Magazine*. A

member of Post GR06 in the Department of France, Steen discussed his wartime experience and why he felt compelled to write about it.

You describe “Black Knight Alfa” as a novel based on true stories. What percent is true, and what percent is story?

All of the stories are true. The story part relates to providing the reader with the (fictionalized) names of the main characters.

From the time you entered the Army, you had a desire to go straight into combat. Why?

I had stood with my soldier brothers in the sunshine during training. In the war, I was determined to stand with them in the shadows, if that was God’s will. I had to go to Vietnam, and I was determined to stand beside my brothers on the line.

At that time, did it matter to you that acceptance of black combat soldiers was a breakthrough in the military?

My lifetime wish was to be a soldier. From the beginning of the war in Vietnam, my soldier brothers were going to join the fighting. We, the black men, had always fought for our country. Remember Crispus Attucks, March 5, 1770.

The rapidly growing freedom movements were taking place back home in America, and those of us black soldiers were fighting like hell to stay alive.

The timing of the fighting back home was very difficult for all of us at that time. We were already fighting. During the early civil rights movement, the black soldiers were still undermined, enslaved in a way. This was an untruth perpetrated by racists: that a colored man could not be a good soldier, that he was dumb, incapable of being a true man and a good soldier. Our old detractors had raised their voices, trying to keep us down. We had long ago proven that they were not telling the truth. And so the war in Vietnam was the right time for Katie to bar the damn door – the time for the black soldier to take his rightful place in the strong line right behind the call to glory ... duty, honor, country.

But I guess folks were hearing what they wanted to hear, even though it wasn’t all true. I was in more than one company and led a LRRP, and we did not smoke pot through the barrels of our shotguns or any other way. We were truly brothers in arms. And if we wanted to stay alive, skagging was not the way. With us, my life depended on the



At 82, Fred Steen remembers with great pride his time as a member of the 1st Air Cav in Vietnam. Photo courtesy Fred Steen

soldiers on the line beside me. We didn't have time for doing drugs. We spent our time together staying alive.

What about the anti-war movement during your time in Vietnam and after?

American public opinion and opposition to the war did not trouble me at the time because I was a soldier, dedicated to the government of the people, by and for the people. I took an oath, and I stood by that oath, all the way up to this very second.

But yes, it does hurt whenever I hear someone bad-mouthing us Vietnam vets. That's why I wrote "Black Knight Alfa."

What is the image that comes to mind when you think about your wartime enemies?

Charlie was not incompetent in battle and killed a lot of Americans. In truth, his competence was based mainly upon his being able to hide behind the skirts of women. And yes, our incompetence in not being able to find him in his underground ratholes. The truth is that Charlie did not win the Vietnam War.

So much of your recollection of the war is set "under the canopy," where some horrific fighting occurred. Why?

Sometimes it was damn spooky, constantly dark, and we had to hold onto our minds to keep from blowing what little we had left all to hell. We had to trust each other and our ability to fight and, most importantly, to win.

We knew it for sure that old Charlie was just as restricted as we were. And, yes, in most cases he had the advantage because the damn canopy was

his, in his jungle. Old Charlie had read our manuals and knew the restrictions about having mask clearances before shooting our mortars. He didn't know how we had perfected the use of our thump guns. When they jumped us, we continually came up with new ways to make them back off or to run like hell.

We learned to make the canopy work for us, to use the eerie darkness on our behalf. Sometimes the heat or humidity was our worst enemy. Under the canopy was where trust and teamwork stood out for us. And it was proof positive that we could fight old Charlie and beat him at his own game. He couldn't scare us into submission. Teamwork and the unbreakable will to survive was our mainstay ... oh, and I cannot forget that magnificent little Claymore anti-personnel device. We tried real hard not to do the same thing over and over again. Sometimes we simply disappeared just like old Charlie was said to be able to do. In our case, we had it down to an exact science.

We were in contact or firefights with Charlie almost daily, nights included. During those times, all of us had accepted the cold hard fact that "I" could be next on that medevac flight out of here. And so our frame of mind was adjusted to that fact. I was not a stranger to old Death. I had learned the dignity of our troopers and, yes, I was asking God to let me go out with the same dignity.

When you were in Vietnam, experiencing all this, why did you make a vow to one day write about what really happened?

It seemed that most books about the American soldiers fighting the war were written by officers and civilian reporters. I was only a sergeant first class, and without a diploma for anything. It appeared to me that some kind of diploma or higher education was required, and I was fresh out of diplomas. I just wanted to tell our stories to the world ... about all of our American soldiers, of those proud Americans who stood together and held the line.

All of my stories and work come directly from my road and my will to leave a scratch on the wall of my cave. In my heart, I only wanted to set the record straight and to say that my troopers were, and still are, the best ever.

My country allowed me to walk through the valley of death with the best men this world has ever witnessed. I am blessed that I knew them. 🌿

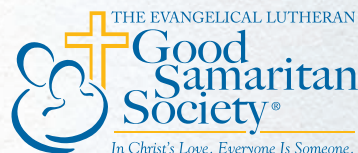
Jeff Stoffer is editor of The American Legion Magazine.



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Matt Chandler

SAILORS UNITED

They hung up their dress whites decades ago, but the veterans of the Tin Can Sailors Association aren't ready to leave their ships behind.

BY MATT CHANDLER

Standing on the deck of USS *The Sullivans*, the Fletcher-class destroyer bathed in early morning sunlight, Navy veteran Tony Kowalski is nearly five decades removed from active service. But as his eyes scan the length of the ship, it's as though he has stepped back in time to 1963, into the body of his 20-year-old self. His eyes are wide and his voice brims with excitement as he recounts the story of serving on *The Sullivans* as the ship steamed toward open waters off Cape Cod, Mass. It was April 1963, and Kowalski and his shipmates were working as part of a training school for destroyers when disaster struck. USS *Thresher*, a nuclear-powered attack submarine, was lost at sea.



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"I was in the log room and the engineering officer ran in and said to me, 'We got a big problem ... we're going to sea,'" he says.

The Sullivans was one of the first ships to reach the site where *Thresher* had lost radio contact during a training exercise, but it was too late. *Thresher*, with a crew of 129 men on board, was lost that day, and it is that kind of experience – being on the front lines of both history and tragedy – that led Kowalski and thousands of other Navy veterans who served aboard destroyers to join a group affectionately known as the Tin Can Sailors.

The organization, which has more than 16,000 members nationwide, celebrates the unique experiences of the men who served aboard the Navy's small destroyers. The Tin Can Sailors organize regional and national events meant to share stories, educate future generations and preserve the history of an often-forgotten class of ship in the naval fleet.

On this particular day, Kowalski has traveled more than 400 miles from his home in New Haven, Conn., to Buffalo, N.Y., where he is taking part in one of the group's most treasured events: Field Day. He is joined by between 30 and 40 other veterans who have returned to *The Sullivans* – now housed in the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, overlooking the Canadian shoreline from the U.S. side of the Niagara River. They will spend the weekend retelling tales from the high seas and bonding with other veterans aboard the ship they once called home.

Make no mistake about it, the men are here to swap stories and connect with other veterans, but these weekends are also about work. Kowalski spends much of Field Day laboring in the ship's fire room, where he served as a boiler man more than a half-century ago.

"Being on it 50 years later is amazing," he says, a smile spreading across his face as he offers a tour of the cramped quarters below deck. "I'm working in the aft fire room where I worked back in '63, and it is like the smells are still there, the feeling is still there. You can almost hear the voices."

The Tin Can Sailors clean, paint and repair these destroyers as a sort of cathartic experience and to help preserve them for future generations. They play a key role in the restoration of nine of these "museum ships" around the country, including *The Sullivans*.

Terry Miller, who has served as the executive director of the Tin Can Sailors since 2001, says the preservation of these pieces of U.S. naval history is especially important.



Bob Davis of Rumson, N.J., served aboard *The Sullivans* from 1960 to 1964. In August, he made his fourth trip to the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park to be part of an annual Field Day aboard the destroyer. Photo by Matthew Chandler

"The average veteran begins to feel nostalgic about his naval service quite a few years after he has served, and there is a desire to talk about old times," Miller says. "We provide that outlet."

He says the bond these Tin Can veterans have – though many meet each other for the first time during Field Days – is unique to this particular class of ship.

"This kind of bond is something you find on the smaller ships, the destroyers and the submarines. You won't find it on the bigger ships," Miller says. "They (aircraft carriers) were like floating cities with 6,000 people on board. But with the destroyers, you had 250 to 300 people, and you felt like it was home, and this was your family."

That sentiment is echoed by 71-year-old Bob Davis, who served aboard *The Sullivans* from 1960 to 1964 as a machinist mate in the forward engine room. He boarded the ship with several of the veterans who have returned to Buffalo for Field Days, including Kowalski. Though he lives in Rumson, N.J., this is Davis' fourth trip to Buffalo to visit the ship that was his home away from home during a tense moment in U.S. naval history.

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Orleck DD 886, Lake Charles, La.

Slater DE 766, Destroyer Escort Historical Museum, Albany, N.Y.

Stewart DE 238, Seawolf Park, Galveston, Texas


The Sullivans DD 537, Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, Buffalo, N.Y.

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Davis was barely out of his teens when he, Kowalski and their shipmates got the call: *The Sullivans* was tapped to be part of the fleet headed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as part of the naval blockade ordered by President John F. Kennedy in October 1962.

As the world watched and waited – with nuclear war seeming a very real possibility – life aboard the ship was business as usual.

"You are so focused on the job, you don't even know that much about what is going on," he says. "We had no idea, really, about the nuclear stuff. We just knew we weren't going to lose that base to anybody."

Looking back, Davis and the other Tin Can Sailors who shared the experience have a quiet modesty about the mission that, in the eyes of many, prevented all-out nuclear war.

"We were just lucky, all of us, in that no shots were fired," he says. "We backed Russia down, really, because we had a navy and they didn't."

Today, those memories are the foundation of an unbreakable bond that draws the veterans back

year after year to serve again on the ships where, for many, their naval careers began.

The Tin Can Sailors Association was founded in 1976, just 11 years after Joseph Fugalli was part of the last crew to serve aboard *The Sullivans* before it was decommissioned. Now 72, he has been "jumping from ship to ship" to volunteer as a member of the Tin Can Sailors, beginning with USS *Edson* and culminating in this, his 16th year working aboard *The Sullivans*.

Upon hearing that the destroyer would be displayed in Buffalo, Fugalli – who lives in Queens, N.Y. – made the trek to western New York with his wife to revisit his military past. It was 1997, and though more than 30 years had passed since he last set foot on the destroyer, one thing hadn't changed.

"I wanted to show my wife my bunk, and she said, 'How do you know that's where you slept?'" Fugalli recalls. "I told her, 'There are certain things you just don't forget.'" He found the bunk, flipped up the lid on the storage locker below and, sure enough, there was a worn nameplate with "Joe Fugalli" etched on it.

Though *The Sullivans* has been converted into a floating naval museum, Fugalli and his shipmates say the vessel is just like they remember it from their tours of duty in the 1960s.

"Very little has changed," he says as he surveys the ship, its deck buzzing with activity as sailors from his own era – men mostly in their 70s – scrub, screw, hammer, chisel and paint, breathing new life back into the destroyer that was such an intimate part of their early lives.

People who didn't serve in the Navy don't always understand the deep respect and admiration sailors have for each other, Fugalli says.

"I don't care where I am, if I'm wearing that uniform, walking on the street, people will stop me and say, 'Hey, I was in the Navy' – instant buddies," he adds, grinning. It's a camaraderie that has only gotten stronger thanks to his involvement with the Tin Can Sailors and their annual Field Day weekends.

"Hanging out on the ship with 40 or 50 guys and sharing stories, that's what it's all about. You've got 1,000 sea stories and you laugh, and it makes it all worth it."

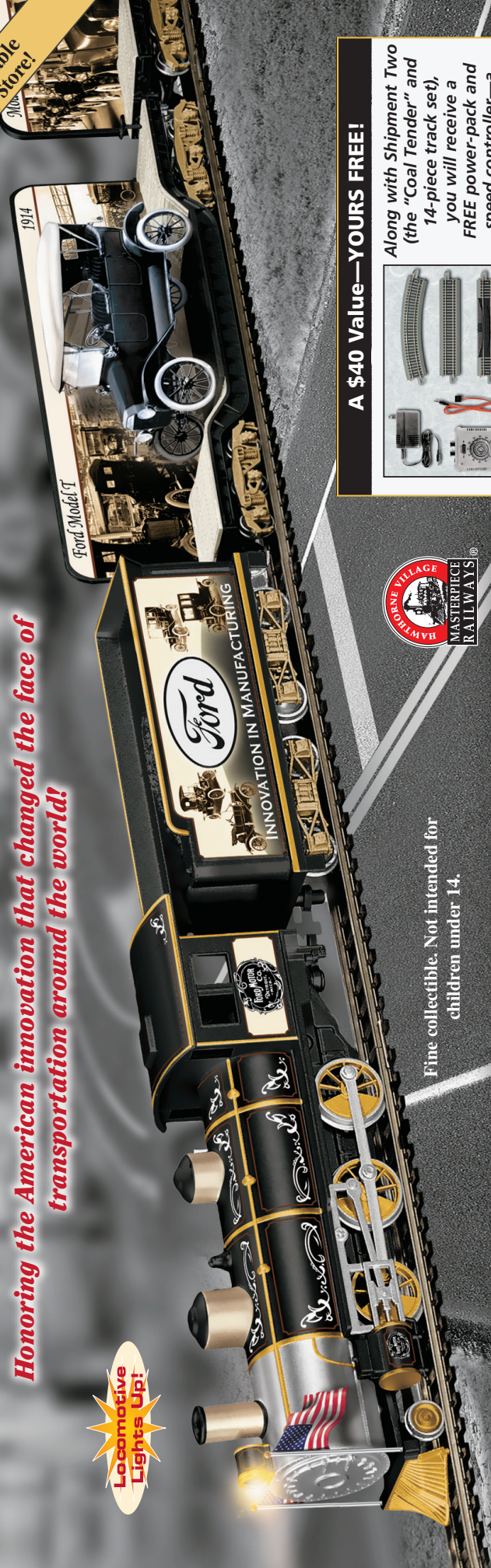
Beyond the stories, the Tin Can Sailors tackle restoration projects because each man says he wants to make sure this vital part of U.S. history isn't lost to the ages as the decades pass. They see the preservation of these ships as a sort of living history lesson for future generations.

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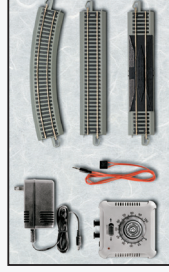
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Joe Fugalli of Queens, N.Y., served in the Navy from 1960 to 1968, including time aboard *The Sullivans*, named for the five Sullivan brothers who lost their lives when their own ship, *USS Juneau*, was sunk by a Japanese submarine during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. Fugalli worked in the engine room, and was part of the last crew that served aboard the destroyer before its decommissioning. For 16 years, Fugalli has traveled to Buffalo to participate in Field Days with other Tin Can Sailors.

Photo by Matthew Chandler

Hal Burke spent 1964 aboard *The Sullivans* and organizes regional events like this Field Day. Watching a group of schoolchildren board the ship, the oldest no more than 15, he says, “Those kids are the other reason we do what we do.”

Burke is so passionate about educating young people about Navy history that he has brought along his 8-year-old grandson, Joey, to work alongside him. It’s a chance to pass along his knowledge and, he hopes, instill some awareness of the sacrifices his generation made to preserve and protect freedom.

“People want to know,” says Burke, describing the public’s interest in these floating museums (more than 60,000 visitors each year tour *The Sullivans* in Buffalo). “I think all these guys coming together to honor these ships, and then people being able to tour the ships, feeds that interest in learning more about American history.”

Miller agrees, saying that the Tin Can Sailors have raised nearly \$2 million through its membership, given in grants to the destroyer museums across the country to aid in the maintenance and preservation of the ships.

“There are history books in high school that cover World War II in two paragraphs and Vietnam in two sentences,” Miller says. “So it’s frustrating to see the lack of understanding today, and it is why preserving these ships is critical.”

Patrick Cunningham is the longtime executive director of the Buffalo park, which is also home to *USS Little Rock*, a Cleveland-class light cruiser, and *USS Croaker*, a Gato-class submarine. For 20 years, he’s watched Tin Can Sailors visit Buffalo to keep their ship in pristine condition. While he appreciates the group’s physical work, he sees the greatest

value in the firsthand knowledge and experience they possess. He says the retired *Sullivans* sailors offer “an educational and inspirational experience” for the visitors and staff at the naval park.

“It teaches these kids a little bit, and I’ve had them say to me, ‘Now I know what my grandfather was talking about when he talked about life aboard a ship,’” Cunningham says.

Taking a break from cutting away a gun mount as part of this year’s restoration work, Fugalli wipes the sweat from his brow, replaces his well-worn *The Sullivans* cap and explains why, after 16 years of volunteering for the annual Field Day, he has no plans to slow down.

“I was told by World War II veterans who came into service a generation before me, ‘You’ve got to carry our memory because we are going to be dead and gone,’” he says. “I am absolutely amazed that when people come aboard, they have no idea when the second world war was fought. They don’t know who the participants were. Very little history has been carried forward, and I don’t know if I can make up for that.”

But he says he isn’t going to quit trying, and he sees the Tin Can Sailors’ work as a vital part of that effort.

“It seems to me that the world wants to forget,” Fugalli says, taking a long pause and casting his gaze out over the calm, early morning waters of the Niagara River before finishing his thought. “And that ... is really my fear.” 🍷

Matt Chandler is a freelance writer from New York. He is the author of seven books for children, including his latest, “Dangerous Times! History’s Most Troubled Eras.”

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New Baby Panda Makes Headlines

This summer, Mei Xiang gave birth to a new giant panda cub. Mama and baby have already captivated millions through the National Zoo giant panda webcam online. Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, the cub's father, are depicted on the Smithsonian Panda Silver Proof at rest within their National Zoo habitat.

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Help a veteran find a job

A gift to American Legion Charities can open doors.

Nearly 1.5 million members of the U.S. Armed Forces are expected to receive discharges from military service in the next two years. They will return from war looking for jobs, business opportunities, educations and information about their benefits. In 2013, The American Legion National Headquarters produced, promoted or supported more than 150 job fairs for newly discharged veterans and those about to separate from military service. That number is expected to grow in 2014.

A glimpse of that rising need was evident at the Legion's 95th National Convention in Houston last August, when more than 600 troops, veterans and their families met with 73 employers, submitted 2,650 résumés and participated in 94 on-the-spot interviews. More than 400 new hires were made. More than 50 active-duty wounded warriors from Fort Hood and Fort Sam Houston attended the Legion's employment summit, as did more than 100 women veterans – all looking for help transitioning from honorable military service to successful civilian careers.

And that was just one event.

"If it weren't for folks like the Legion, to help us guide people in to help run the workshops and staff it, we couldn't do it," explained Ross Cohen, a senior director of the Legion-supported Hiring Our Heroes career fair program put on by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "It's going to take public and private partnerships to get these folks into jobs. It's a huge opportunity, just like after World War II."

By donating to American Legion Charities, you can help make the most of that opportunity and others. Through American Legion Charities, your dollars go directly to programs that help veterans and families in transition. Donors can choose specific programs to support, or give to the general fund where resources can be allocated to programs as funds are needed.

Tax-deductible donations can be made online at www.legion.org/donate by clicking on the box marked "American Legion Charities" and making safe, easy credit-card transactions, which can be set up as recurring contributions. Gifts can also be made through the mail by sending them to: **American Legion Donation Processing, P.O. Box 1954, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

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unemployed.*

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percent
*national
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7.6

percent
*overall veterans
unemployment*

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*total American
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PATRIOTISM

A real American Legion family

He lives in a part of Germany where the U.S. military footprint is fading, but surprisingly, Josh Settle is not the only young man in his school who belongs to Sons of The American Legion (SAL).

"There is one other," he says.

Josh, who at 15 was elected commander of the SAL Detachment of France last spring, is not even the only top-level Legion Family officer in his home. His father, James, is commander of the Legion's Department of France. And his German-born mother, Isolde, is the Department of France Auxiliary president.

This may be the first time in history that a Legion department commander, Auxiliary department president and SAL detachment commander from

AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

Legion says goodbye to war hero, baseball icon

The American Legion recently paid respects to Lou Brissie Jr., a war hero, Major League Baseball icon and former national American Legion Baseball director. Brissie died in Augusta, Ga., Nov. 25. He was 89.

Brissie grew up in Ware Shoals, S.C., where he pitched for a local baseball team before enlisting in the Army and serving with the 88th Infantry Division in Italy. He returned in 1944, a decorated hero with shattered bones in his left leg and two broken ankles from a German artillery barrage. He received a Purple Heart, the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantry Badge. After 23 surgeries, he returned to baseball as a pitcher for the Philadelphia A's in December 1946.

Brissie was traded to the Cleveland Indians in 1951 and finished his career with the team in 1953. He went on to serve as national director of American Legion Baseball from 1954 to 1961. During that time, he led Legion Baseball teams into eight Latin American countries and traveled to Australia to help youth baseball gain a foothold there. For his contributions to youth and baseball, Brissie was presented the Americanism Award at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.



MEMBERSHIP

NEW POSTS

Post 178, Frisco, Texas Chartered Dec. 16 (15 members)

Andrew Cummins Post 503, Pendleton, Ind. Chartered Nov. 19 (20 members)

Wabash Valley Correctional Facility Post 398, Carlisle, Ind. Chartered Nov. 8 (15 members)

Clermont Veterans Memorial Post 357, Clermont, Fla. Chartered Oct. 25 (22 members)

Brock Babb Post 324, Evansville, Ind. Chartered Oct. 17 (17 members)

New Castle Correctional Facility Post 830, New Castle, Ind. Chartered Oct. 14 (16 members)

University of North Dakota Post 401, Grand Forks, N.D. Chartered Oct. 14 (22 members)

Post 154, Pflugerville, Texas Chartered Oct. 7 (15 members)

Andy Nowacki-Lake Erie College Post 807, Painesville, Ohio Chartered Oct. 7 (32 members)

the same family has served in those capacities at the same time. It is, at the very least, a rarity.

James Settle joined the Legion in 1999 after a 21-year Army career. A former MP, James served as post adjutant, department adjutant and vice commander at large before his election as department commander last June.

As his dad was advancing in the Legion, young Josh was at his side, an SAL member since 2002. "He took me to the meetings since I was small," Josh says. "I didn't know anything different. I liked the patriotism."

By 11, Josh was detachment chaplain, saying prayers at meetings, sending get-well and sympathy cards to Legion families and handling other veterans-support activities.

The Settles work hard to keep U.S. patriotism alive in western Europe, marking Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day. At least twice a year, they join other Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons and Legion Riders in commemoration activities honoring nearly 11,000 Americans laid to rest or remembered as missing at the Lorraine American Cemetery near St. Avold, France, which has more U.S. graves than any other World War II cemetery in Europe.

"When one of us goes to an event, we all go," James says, adding that more than 50 Riders can be expected at Lorraine for Memorial Day ceremonies.

The Settles agree that membership growth in Europe is a big challenge when a sizeable portion of department and detachment members live in the United States. Members who live in Europe are often asked to represent both the Legion and the SAL at ceremonies.

Two of Josh's older brothers, Jonathan and James, are also SAL members. Jonathan is a past detachment commander.

If the Legion Family is to continue supporting World War I and World War II remembrance activities, and to assist active-duty personnel stationed there, a new generation needs to take the reins. "The key is to renew," James says, noting that U.S. troop drawdowns stand to reduce the overall pool of eligible members and participants. "The other part of that is to seek new members."

The Department of France, which has nearly 3,000 members, "piggybacks" on Maryland's Boys State program, James says. It sends a contestant to the National Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis. The Legion also supports Junior ROTC programs at U.S. military schools in Europe and raises funds for the Child Welfare Foundation and Fisher House.

"We were always a strong family and supportive of each other," Isolde says. "What I do believe is that we have been strengthened in our resolve to support all veterans and their families through these organizations."

VERBATIM

The pain: feet, back, shoulders – everybody has pushed themselves really hard, but it's worth it.

Army Capt. Ivan Castro, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran who participated in the 200-mile Walking With the Wounded challenge in Antarctica in December. Though competition was suspended due to harsh conditions, three teams of injured soldiers – representing the United States, the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth – reached the South Pole. Prince Harry and actors Dominic West and Alexander Skarsgård joined the trek.

Source: CBS News



Air Force

CAPITOL HILL

'A perverse incentive'

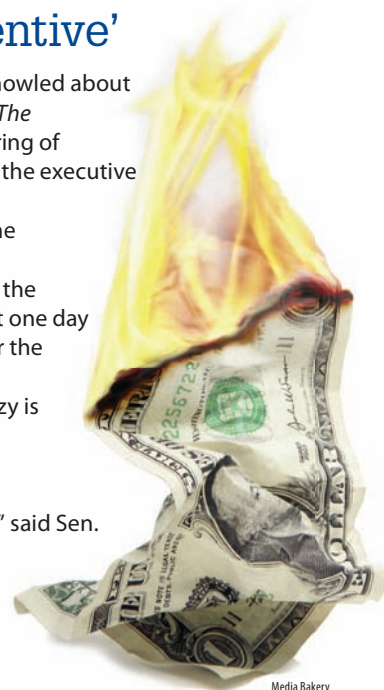
Even as federal agency heads howled about the dire impact of the sequester, *The Washington Post* reported on a string of eyebrow-raising expenditures by the executive branch:

\$562,000 worth of artwork for the Department of Veterans Affairs
\$144,000 on toner cartridges for the Department of Agriculture, in just one day
\$178,000 on "furniture rehab" for the Coast Guard

The end-of-year spending frenzy is largely a function of the federal budget process' use-it-or-lose-it incentive system.

"The way we budget sets it up," said Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., "because instead of being praised for not spending all your money, you get cut for not spending all your money. And so we've got a perverse incentive in there."

As further evidence, the *Post* reported that the federal government spent \$45 billion on contracts in the last week of September, which coincides with the end of the fiscal year. "That was more than any other week – 9 percent of the year's contract spending money, spent in 2 percent of the year."



Media Bakery



Legion supports plan for Desert Storm memorial

A national war memorial honoring veterans of Desert Shield and Desert Storm is well into the planning and fundraising stage, and has the backing of The American Legion, which passed a resolution supporting the project at the 95th National Convention in Houston.

Scott Stump, a Marine Corps veteran and president of the National Desert Storm War Memorial's board of directors, served six months in support of Desert Storm and Desert Shield. In 2010, during a reunion at Texas A&M University marking the 20th anniversary of the Gulf War, discussions began on how best to ensure that those who served and sacrificed are not forgotten. "A lot of kids don't know what Desert Storm was," Stump says. "It's getting lost in the shuffle of history."

That may be, but to many Americans – including those who served during that era – Desert Storm went a long way toward healing national scars from the Vietnam War, and elevated awareness of the U.S. military among the public. Of the roughly 600,000 U.S. troops deployed, 293 died in theater, 149 of whom were killed in action.

Veterans have been part of the planning process from the start. Retired Lt. Col. Kyle Leggs, an Army veteran of the war, is the memorial's design chairman and says the association surveyed thousands of veterans and "other citizen contributors," asking what they believe the war accomplished, how it should be remembered, and what a physical memorial should include or bring to mind. A consensus is apparent from the first public renderings of the memorial, intended to be situated in Washington, D.C., near other national war memorials. Names of the fallen would be etched in the wall; the war's timeline shown in a 150-foot-long series of sculptured pictograms to include the 34-nation coalition; and it's hoped the memorial itself will be made of Kuwaiti limestone. The memorial's walls and floor will evoke thoughts of the desert, with bronze statues depicting U.S. troops in gas masks and anti-chemical protective gear – as Leggs puts it, the experiences of Gulf War veterans come to life.

Michael L. Emerson, a Marine Corps veteran of Desert Shield and Desert Storm, has become a go-to person for groups working to build memorials nationwide. Stump contacted Emerson to help advise on the project's size, aesthetics and location.

The memorial association's top priority right now is fundraising; as a 501(c)(3), it seeks no taxpayer money. Any funds raised above the cost of construction will go to the National Park Service as a maintenance account in perpetuity. Two bills – H.R. 503 and S. 995 – are moving through Congress to authorize donations of federal land for the memorial, and need co-sponsors. Other priorities include legal consulting, donor cultivation and online content development.

Learn more about the National Desert Storm War Memorial:

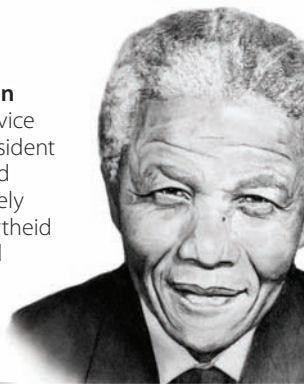
 www.nationaldesertstormwarmemorial.org

VERBATIM

“South Africa has lost a hero. They have lost a father. The world has lost a beloved friend and mentor.”

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, at a memorial service for former South African President Nelson Mandela, who passed away Dec. 5. Mandela is largely remembered as an anti-apartheid icon who championed racial reconciliation and human rights.

Source: CNN



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

A costly spring

Economists with HSBC Bank report that between 2011 and 2014, the political convulsions of the Arab Spring have cost Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Bahrain \$800 billion in lost economic output and 35 percent of total GDP.

"In lost life, forgone economic output and weakened political institutions, the costs of the Arab Spring have been extraordinarily heavy and continue to mount," according to HSBC.

BY THE NUMBERS

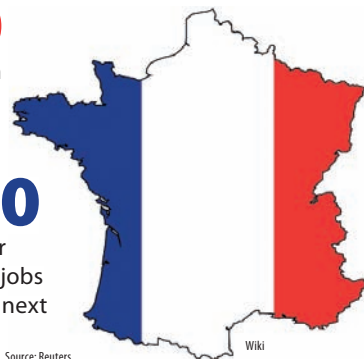
French defense cuts

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Number of French military jobs to be cut in 2014

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Estimated number of French military jobs to be cut over the next five years



Source: Reuters

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Source: Daily Mail (U.K.)

WAR ON TERRORISM

Supersized IED

Afghan security forces operating near Pakistan recently discovered a truck loaded with 61,500 pounds of explosives – perhaps the largest truck bomb ever built, according to ABC News. “By comparison, the truck bomb that all but leveled the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, killing 168 people, comprised almost 5,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate fertilizer mixed with fuel oil,” ABC reports.

The 61,500-pound bomb would have “the power to raze whole blocks in an American city,” one terrorism expert told ABC.

VERBATIM

“I hoard incandescent light bulbs. I’ve been hoarding them for two years.”

Stephanie Leggett, owner of Odile's Interiors in Orange, Texas, on the manufacturing ban of bulbs rated at 40 and 60 watts.

Alternatives include compact fluorescents and LEDs, but many consumers don't like the higher prices and the color of the light given off.

Wiki

Source: The Beaumont Enterprise

TECHNOLOGY

FEARLESS PREDICTIONS

After *The Patriot-News* of Pennsylvania officially retracted a story it published about the Gettysburg Address 150 years ago, *The Daily Beast* unearthed a few other long-overdue news items and predictions that may need retracting:



In **1825**, *The Quarterly Review* asked, “What can be more palpably absurd than the prospect held out of locomotives traveling twice as fast as stagecoaches?”

An **1876** internal Western Union memo concluded, “This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication.”



In **1899**, *The Literary Digest* confidently declared, “The ordinary ‘horseless carriage’ is at present a luxury for the wealthy; although its price will probably fall in the future, it will never, of course, come into as common use as the bicycle.”

In **1936**, *The New York Times* panned space travel, concluding, “A rocket will never be able to leave the Earth’s atmosphere.”



In **1938**, *Fortune* magazine reported that “few scientists foresee any serious or practical use for atomic energy ... They regard the atom-splitting experiments as useful steps in the attempt to describe the atom more accurately, not as the key to the unlocking of any new power.”

In **1939**, *The New York Times* argued, “The problem with television is that people must sit and keep their eyes glued on a screen; the average American family hasn’t time for it,” adding that TV would “never be a serious competitor of broadcasting.”



“Remote shopping, while entirely feasible, will flop,” *Time* declared in **1966**, patronizingly adding that “women like to get out of the house, like to handle merchandise, like to be able to change their minds.”



In **1995**, *InfoWorld* published a column concluding that “the Internet will soon go spectacularly supernova and in 1996 catastrophically collapse.”

ACTIVE DUTY

Sequestration continues to limit military outreach

The Navy’s Blue Angels and the Air Force’s Thunderbirds will be back at air shows across the country this year, *Military Times* reports. The Pentagon has earmarked \$129 million for the precision aerial-acrobatics teams to return to the skies.

Even so, sequestration will hold the number of military-outreach programs far below pre-sequestration levels: military units will attend between 1,000 and 1,500 events, rather than the 2,800 events before the sequester guillotine fell.

Sixty-two air shows were canceled in 2013 due to the budget cuts mandated by sequestration, according to *Military Times*.



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HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

1943: Year of uncertainty examined at WWII conference

By late 1943, fighting was at a stalemate, scholars explained at November's sixth annual International Conference on World War II in New Orleans. "The Germans were losing, and they thought they were losing," renowned historian and author Donald Miller told hundreds at the event produced by the National World War II Museum. "We were losing, and we thought we were losing. This is a war we thought we were going to win in 1943."

In the air, on land and at sea, the second year of America's commitment to defeat the Axis was one that ushered in massive changes in warfighting. The conference examined such breakthroughs as unrestricted submarine warfare, Higgins boat island-hopping in the Pacific, the emergence of the P-51 fighter-bomber, and little-heralded engineers who designed and built weapons and equipment that made major differences.

Titled "1943: Victory in the Balance," the conference wound up with a special presentation by former CIA director and retired Gen. David Petraeus, who led coalition forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom; he reflected on the lessons of World War II and the reason that many of its innovations, such as parachuting into battle, remain viable today. "The fact is, the fastest way to get a brigade to the ground is you put them on planes, you open the doors and they jump out," Petraeus said during the George P. Shultz Forum on World Affairs. "There is something to be said about people who will hook up to a static line and go out the door of a plane with 100 pounds of equipment hanging off of them. That's the guy I want when the going gets tough."

Miller, whose book "Masters of the Air" is now being made into an HBO miniseries, told the crowd that 1943 stands apart for the appearance of "triphobious warfare. It revolutionized the way war was fought. No one had fought this way before."



Author Donald Miller speaks at the World War II conference.

Photo by Jeff Stoffer

He and other scholars discussed the deadly cost of this time of uncertainty, when "no one had air mastery;" military and political leaders were at odds with each other; U.S. torpedo accuracy was far from perfect; and China, struggling to survive as the earliest-attacked nation of the war, proved essential to Allied victory despite tremendous losses at the hands of the Japanese.

Visit www.ww2conference.com to view archived videos of the speakers, who included best-selling authors Rick Atkinson, Paul Kennedy, Alex Kershaw and others.

Find more coverage of the event online:

 www.legion.org/headlines/honor



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GALLERY

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment march toward Kasserine and Feriana, Tunisia, on Feb. 26, 1943. The Kasserine Pass was the site of the United States' first major defeat of World War II. German forces broke through the Allied defensive line, killing more than 1,000 U.S. soldiers and taking hundreds prisoner.



VERBATIM

“... a battle against a rare storm, the likes of which we have never seen.”

Nir Barkat, mayor of Jerusalem. The Holy City received more than 4 inches of snow on Dec. 12, blocking roadways and stranding hundreds of motorists. A second storm delivered three times that amount, by far Jerusalem's heaviest snowfall since 1950.

Source: *The Jerusalem Post*

SOCIETY

Welfare windfall

A Cato Institute report comparing the welfare benefits offered to individuals in different states reveals that Hawaii provides the most generous benefits package in the country, and Mississippi the smallest. The report was analyzed by *The Wall Street Journal*, which notes, “The most generous benefits are in states that have the highest costs of living.” The jurisdictions offering the largest benefits packages include:

Hawaii	\$49,175
Washington, D.C.	\$43,099
Massachusetts	\$42,515
Connecticut	\$38,761
New Jersey	\$38,728
Rhode Island	\$38,632
New York	\$38,004
Vermont	\$37,705
New Hampshire	\$37,160
Maryland	\$35,672

MEMBERSHIP

Legion efforts influence IRS' DD-214 revision

The American Legion has succeeded in persuading the IRS to revise Section 501(c)19 of the Internal Revenue Code, which requires Legion posts to keep records on file of members' DD-214s – the separation document given by the military to prove honorable service.

The IRS had been fining posts up to \$1,000 per day for not keeping records of veterans' DD-214s or other valid documentation. The Legion felt it was wrongly targeted, and passed three resolutions at the 95th National Convention in Houston calling on Congress to look into IRS field investigations.

In December, Legion staff and legal representation met with IRS officials to request a change in its internal regulations and guidance. Effective immediately, DD-214s are only required if an agent "possesses information that contradicts documentary information provided (by the VSO) or if the organization fails to satisfy a reasonable request."

The Legion also requested that the IRS appoint district VSO liaisons who would attend department conventions to provide training and other assistance.





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ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

When can VA reduce compensation?



Tracy L. Davis
Department Service
Officer, Missouri

Q: I am receiving 100 percent disability for prostate cancer that's Agent Orange-related. If my cancer goes into remission, can VA reduce my compensation?

A: Yes, VA may reduce your compensation. Prostate cancer ratings are determined by a VA regulation, 38 CFR 4.115b. This regulation states, in part, "Following the cessation of surgical, X-ray, antineoplastic

chemotherapy or other therapeutic procedure, the rating of 100 percent shall continue with a mandatory VA examination at the expiration of six months. Any change in evaluation based upon that or any subsequent examination shall be subject to the provisions of 38 CFR 3.105(e). If there has been no local reoccurrence or metastasis, the disability is to be rated on residuals as voiding dysfunction or renal dysfunction, whichever is predominant."

Once your cancer is in remission, VA will not be able to compensate you at 100-percent disability based on treatment for the cancer. If you have residuals from the treatment, VA needs to separately rate them. Common secondary conditions from prostate cancer treatment include urinary problems, rectum or bowel issues, erectile dysfunction and depression.

You should make a new claim for any secondary conditions by submitting evidence showing cancer-related complications. VA will make a new decision to match your symptoms with the rating schedule. This is often a separate decision from the proposal to reduce the cancer rating.

Ask your medical providers to assist with providing evidence. For example, disability benefits questionnaires (DBQs) may be used as medical evidence for VA to rate your condition and any additional conditions associated with your service-connected cancer.

Learn more about DBQs online:

 www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/dbq_disabilityexams.asp

Find an American Legion accredited service officer in your state:  www.legion.org/serviceofficers

Do you have a question for Department of Missouri Service Officer Tracy Davis about the claims process or veterans benefits or general? Send it to askso@legion.org.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

New policy in works for veteran burials

As *Military Times* reports, in approving the Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act, the Senate is laying the groundwork for a system whereby federal officials may reconsider interment decisions when there is "clear and convincing evidence

that a veteran was convicted of a capital crime, or committed a capital crime but was not convicted because they were not tried as a result of death or flight from prosecution."

The bill is named for the victim of a shooting rampage perpetrated by Michael L. Anderson, an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan and was buried in 2012 at the Fort Custer National Cemetery. Anderson allegedly murdered Koehl, shot three others and then killed himself at an Indianapolis-area apartment complex. "VA officials knew nothing of his alleged involvement in the shooting," according to *Military Times*. "If they had, there are procedures in law that could have prevented the burial."

The new disinterment process would apply only to burials that occur after the bill becomes law, with one exception: the bill would order Anderson's remains to be removed. It now awaits action in the House.



EDUCATION

Flight school and the GI Bill



Q: I would like to attend a flight school, but I am not sure if I may use my Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. How does VA handle payments?

A: Payments for flight training vary based on the type of course and school. If you are enrolled at a public institution, you can be reimbursed up to the school's in-state cost of the training, and receive a monthly housing allowance and the books and supplies

stipend. For a private institution, you can be reimbursed up to the full cost of training or the national maximum (currently \$19,198.31) per academic year, whichever is less. You may also receive a monthly housing allowance and the books and supplies stipend. For a vocational flight training program, you can be reimbursed the lesser of the full cost of training or the annual limit (currently \$10,970.46) in effect the day you began training. You will not receive a housing allowance or the books and supplies stipend.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona. askvalerie@legion.org

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Perfect Choice HD is NOT a hearing aid. It is a Personal Sound Amplification Product (PSAP). Hearing aids can only be sold by an audiologist or a licensed hearing instrument specialist following hearing tests and fitting appointments. Once the audiologist had you tested and fitted, you would have to pay as much as \$5000 for the product.

Now, thanks to the efforts of the doctor who leads a renowned hearing institute, there is Perfect Choice HD. It's designed to accurately amplify sounds and

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PERSONAL FINANCE



Let tax brackets guide your retirement

FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

At times I feel like a broken record: "Save, save, save!" That's my mantra when it comes to preparing for retirement. But lately I'm getting quite a few questions from those who have already crossed the retirement threshold. They've done the heavy lifting, built a nice retirement fund, and are now trying to figure out how

and in what order to start using it. Should they dip into their 401(k)s first? What about tapping traditional IRAs, Roth IRAs or even money outside retirement accounts? It's a good problem to have, but a problem nonetheless.

■ **Find the "right" order.** Traditional wisdom would dictate using nonretirement accounts first, then shifting to traditional retirement accounts, and tapping Roth accounts last. The general idea is to hold on to the tax advantages of these retirement plans as long as possible. It's a solid approach and in many cases could be the right answer for retirees. Even so, for some folks it might make more sense to modify the approach to avoid missing an opportunity provided by our progressive tax system. Yes, I used "opportunity" and "tax" in the same sentence, but stick with me.

■ **Make the most of your tax bracket.** It's no secret that the more income you have, the higher your taxes will be. But what's often overlooked is that in our system, everyone pays the same tax as their income moves through the tax brackets. For example, in 2014, you, I and Warren Buffett will all pay the same 15 percent on our 30,000th dollar of taxable income. Granted, Buffett may blow right through the brackets to the point of paying 39.6 percent on most of his income, but the 30,000th dollar will still be taxed at 15 percent. What's my point? You may or may not have room within that bracket, and that could affect how and when you withdraw money from your retirement accounts.

In 2014, the 15 percent bracket applies to taxable income between \$18,151 and \$73,800 for joint filers (the range is \$9,076 to \$36,900 for single filers). Taxable income is your

income after deductions and exemptions. So after subtracting \$20,800, the standard deduction and exemptions, a couple could have an adjusted gross income of up to \$94,100 and still remain in the 15 percent bracket. And there lies the potential opportunity.

You may assess the tax landscape and your personal plan and decide that withdrawing money from your IRA or old 401(k) and paying 15 percent is a relatively good deal. If that's the case, the old rule of thumb to delay touching your tax-deferred assets may not hold true – at least for the portion you could withdraw and still remain in the 15 percent bracket. For example, if you are on track to finish the year with \$53,800 of taxable income, you could voluntarily withdraw up to \$20,000 from a traditional IRA or retirement plan and still only pay 15 percent tax on the withdrawal.

On the other hand, you might review your finances and find that you're on target to finish the year with \$72,000 of taxable income – you're now creeping toward the top of the 15 percent bracket – but still have a vacation, car or some other major expense you'll need to withdraw funds to cover. In that situation, you might choose to use nonretirement or Roth money to avoid climbing into the 25 percent bracket.

On a cautionary note, if you're currently below the maximum Social Security taxation limits, adding additional income could cause a larger portion of your benefit to be taxable. In any case, the key is to understand where you're at in the tax-bracket structure and recognize how it might influence your decision with respect to tapping your retirement funds. This is something you, or you and your team of advisers, should be aware of and take into consideration as you map out your plan for how you'll use your money in 2014. Good luck.

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.



www.legion.org/focusonfinances

ACTIVE DUTY

Not-so-temporary housing

In a further sign of a long-term U.S. presence in Australia, the Australian government has launched an \$11 million construction project to upgrade military facilities ahead of the arrival of U.S. Marine units, according to *Defense News* reports.

The Marine Corps' presence in Australia will increase dramatically in 2014, with 1,200 Marines arriving for six months of training. By 2016, the United States expects to deploy a full Marine air-ground task force of 2,500.

EMPLOYMENT

It will now be the law to provide active duty servicemembers with the tools they need to more easily receive credentials for the skills they acquire through military training, greatly easing their transition.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., after the Senate passed the Troop Talent Act in December. The American Legion strongly supported the measure, designed to provide veterans a leg up in the pursuit of civilian careers that require specialized training.

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OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

Water therapy to help veterans in New Mexico, thanks to OCW

Albuquerque's VA spinal cord unit received special therapy equipment thanks in part to a donation of nearly \$30,000 from The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program. The gift was presented by the Legion's Department of New Mexico.

A unique \$7,000 underwater treadmill cycle and other aquatic equipment will assist veterans who use the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, says Michelle McKenzie, the recreation therapist for the spinal cord unit.

"The underwater treadmill cycle is going to be a part of the hands-on therapy with the physical therapists where the veterans are learning how to emulate movement and how to use their lower limbs," McKenzie says. "With this particular piece of



Goods donated through Operation Comfort Warriors and delivered by The American Legion Department of New Mexico will benefit VA patients in Albuquerque. Steven St. John

equipment, you can sit and do leg extensions and compressions and modify it to walk. As physical therapists, we do that with our veterans on land. But we can now do it on water, and that's going to be an awesome piece of equipment to include in our program."

The VA facility also received a DVD

and Blu-Ray player system that holds up to 400 movies and can be hooked up to the hospital's central system so veterans can watch any of them from their rooms.

To donate to Operation Comfort Warriors, please visit:

 www.legion.org/OCW

VERBATIM

“Hardworking taxpayers shouldn’t foot the bill for lavish official portraits, especially when government officials spend more on paintings of themselves than some Americans make in a year.”

Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., who introduced a bill with Sen. Jeanne Sheehan, D-N.H., that would limit the amount of taxpayer funds spent on oil portraits, and would cover only paintings of lawmakers in the line of succession to the presidency.

Media Bakery

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

NFL's Ravens honor SAL volunteer

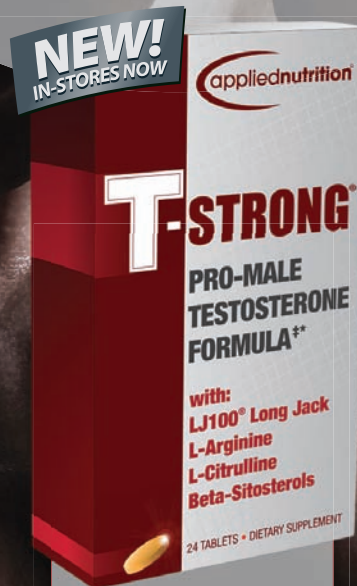
The NFL's Baltimore Ravens honored Sons of The American Legion member Thomas Clavell of Hampstead, Md., in December as one of the team's 2013 Community Quarterback Award recipients. The award recognizes individuals who exemplify "dedication, leadership and commitment to improving the communities in which they live through volunteerism."

Clavell received the recognition for his dedication to SAL Squadron 200 and local veterans. He coordinates fundraising events that provide support for veterans, families and youth; he spearheaded the building of a pavilion dedicated to POW/MIAs; and he transports veterans to appointments at the local VA medical center. A past squadron commander, he is also a volunteer fireman.

"I was in shock when I heard I received the award," Clavell said. "I couldn't believe it. I will always be a part of The American Legion Family. I'm never going away. I will always be there for somebody." He received a Ravens jersey, a football signed by quarterback Joe Flacco, a plaque and a \$3,000 grant, which he plans to donate to the Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund.



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RINGING IN THE EARS?

If you suffer from Tinnitus and experience ringing in the ears, buzzing, hissing, whistling, or other sounds, you should know that help is available. Many people are putting up with irritating noises because they are not aware of this proven treatment.

MagniLife® Tinnitus Relief has already helped thousands find relief when nothing else has worked. It can be taken along with other medications with no side effects. *"This tablet seems to be the only thing I've found that brings relief."* - Bert M., Mt. Pleasant, IA. The tablets dissolve under the tongue and

contain Lycopodium, which reduces noises in the ears. *"I would definitely recommend this product to anyone."* - C. Robinson, OH.

MagniLife® Tinnitus Relief is **available at Walgreens, CVS/pharmacy, in the pain relievers aisle, and Rite Aid Pharmacy**. Order risk free for \$19.99 (\$5.95 S&H) for 125 tablets per bottle. Get a **FREE** bottle when you order two for \$39.98 (\$9.95 S&H). Send payment to: MagniLife T-AL7, PO Box 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call **1-800-682-2851**. Satisfaction guaranteed or return the bottles within 90 days for a full refund. Order now at www.MagniLife.com.

SCIATICA BACK PAIN?

If you suffer from Sciatica symptoms, such as intense pain in the buttocks and lower back, or pain and numbness in your legs and feet, you are not alone. Over 170 million people suffer from the burning, tingling, numbing, and shooting pains because they are not aware of this proven treatment.

MagniLife® Sciatica Relief is a special combination of tested ingredients that was developed to help ease the severe discomfort of Sciatica. It can be taken along with other medications with no side effects. The tablets dissolve under the tongue and contain Colocynthis, which has shown to re-

lieve the shooting pains and tingling sensations. *"The Sciatica Relief tablets are a miracle solution to the pain of Sciatica."* - Lillie, CA.

MagniLife® Sciatica Relief is **available at Walgreens, CVS/pharmacy and Rite Aid Pharmacy**. Order risk free for \$19.99 (\$5.95 S&H) for 125 tablets per bottle. Get a **FREE** bottle when you order two for \$39.98 (\$9.95 S&H). Send payment to: MagniLife S-AL7, PO Box 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call **1-800-682-2851**. Satisfaction guaranteed or return the bottles within 90 days for a full refund. Order now at www.MagniLife.com.

LEG CRAMPS AT NIGHT?

If you experience painful and annoying muscle cramps in your legs, calves, feet, or toes, especially at night, you should know relief is available. Over 100 million people suffer from nocturnal leg cramps and are putting up with the pain and loss of sleep because they are not aware of this proven treatment.

MagniLife® Leg Cramp Relief is now helping people that have been living with painful cramps for years. It can be taken along with other medications with no side effects. *"A couple tablets before bed, and no more waking up to painful cramps in my calves."* - Joyce,

Denver, CO. Tablets dissolve under the tongue and contain eight active ingredients, such as magnesia phosphorica, which reduces cramps and radiating pains that are worse at night.

MagniLife® Leg Cramp Relief is **available at CVS/pharmacy and Rite Aid Pharmacy**. Order risk free for \$19.99 (\$5.95 S&H) for 125 tablets per bottle. Get a **FREE** bottle when you order two for \$39.98 (\$9.95 S&H). Send payment to: MagniLife L-AL7, PO Box 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call **1-800-682-2851**. Satisfaction guaranteed or return the bottles within 90 days for a full refund. Order now at www.MagniLife.com.

NEUROPATHY FOOT PAIN?

If you suffer from neuropathy, or pain in your feet due to nerve damage, you should know that help is available. 20 million Americans suffer from diabetic neuropathy and put up with the pain because they are not aware of this proven treatment.

MagniLife® Diabetic Neuropathy Foot Cream contains key ingredients, such as eucalyptus oil and yellow jasmine, known to relieve pain, tingling, and numbness, while natural moisturizers restore cracked, damaged, and itchy skin to help protect against infection. Results are so fantastic, long-time sufferers are seeing improvements for the first time in years.

"This is one product that lives up to what it says. This foot cream is amazing and immediately took the pain away. PRICELESS!!! Thank you again MagniLife." - Dan B. MD.

MagniLife® Diabetic Neuropathy Foot Cream is **available at Walgreens, Rite Aid Pharmacy and Walmart**. Order risk free for \$19.99 (\$5.95 S&H) for a 4 oz jar. Get a **FREE** jar when you order two for \$39.98 (\$9.95 S&H). Send payment to: MagniLife NC-AL7, PO BOX 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call **1-800-659-3015**. Satisfaction guaranteed or return the jars within 90 days for a full refund. Order now at www.MDFootCream.com.

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life

memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

475th Ftr Grp "Satan's Angels" – 431st, 432nd & 433rd Sqdns, Chino Hills, CA, 5/1-4, Dana Grossman, (858) 692-1358, dana@grossman.info; **496th FIS (Hahn AB, Germany, Nov 1956-June 1960)**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 4/28-5/1, Norm Kelley, (352) 489-4436, normlocks@gmail.com; **AF Public Affairs Alumni**, San Antonio, 5/8-11, John Terino, (703) 239-2704, johnterino@afpaaa.org; **Mariner/Marlin Assn**, Providence, RI, 5/28-31, Bob Tibbetts, (859) 223-7871

ARMY

1st Cav Div 2/8, Myrtle Beach, SC, 5/14-25, Doug Hilts, (607) 336-1035, hiltsdm@yahoo.com; **1st Sig Bde Assn**, Williamsburg, VA, 9/11-14, Howard Bartholf, (804) 364-2603, howardsp5@aol.com; **2nd Bn 4th Arty 9th Inf Div (Fort Riley, KS & Vietnam, 1966-1968)**, Indianapolis, 9/11-14, Phil Coursen, (317) 670-7124, pecoursen@aol.com; **3rd Port Reunion of Army Mariners**, Fort Eustis, VA, 5/16-18, Becky Brashears, (757) 566-8110, tugchick@aol.com; **3rd Sqdn 4th Cav**, San Antonio, 9/17-21, Dave Cox, cox.a.34cav@gmail.com; **4th Bn 39th Inf Rgt 9th Inf Div (Vietnam, 1966-1969)**, San Antonio, 4/3-5, Jim Haines, (303) 809-1815, lzbearcat67@live.com; **4th Inf Rgt Vets Assn**, Leesville, LA, 6/4-7, Richard Wideman, (337) 424-1885, 4thinfgrtwarriors@gmail.com

4th Msl Bn 28th Arty Lacrosse Msl, Tampa, FL, 10/14-17, Douglas Schlumbohm, (321) 544-3709, lacrosselma@yahoo.com; **11th Abn Div Assn Mid-Atlantic Cpt – 11th Air Assault Div & 187th Abn RCT**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 2/23-25, Artie Heape, (843) 846-4693, artieheape@centurylink.net; **22nd Inf Rgt Society**, Branson, FL, 4/30-5/3, Betty Brenneman, (941) 697-5987, brenneman@realtyagent.com; **29th Div Assn**, Ocean City, MD, 10/16-19, John Kutcher, (410) 336-4172, jfkutcher@comcast.net; **47th CSH (Desert Storm)**, Las Vegas, 6/22-24, Shelly Teubner, (541) 220-6114, shellyteubner@yahoo.com; **62nd Machine Records & Data Processing Unit (Panama Canal Zone)**, Columbia, SC, 5/21-25, Don Liebner, (704) 947-3310, donjean57@gmail.com

348th Eng Cbt Bn, Omaha, NE, 10/9-12, Tom Bryan, (402) 276-2722, tkbryan@live.com; **765th Sec Plt 765th Bn**, Galena, IL, 5/12-14, Alan Abraham, (608) 274-3516, abraham.alank@gmail.com; **C Co 2/12 Inf 4th Inf Div**, Branson, MO, 9/10-14, Jerry Sneathern, (573) 718-9224, jsneat@gmail.com; **Flatiron Crash-Rescue**, Fort Rucker, AL, 4/25-27, Gene Bess, (573) 855-1417, gbess98@yahoo.com; **US Army Europe 62 (Cold War)**, Helen, GA, 9/26-29, Lee McCaslin, (205) 655-5081, lmccaslin1@charter.net; **Vietnam Guntrucks & All Transportation Units**, Columbus, GA, 8/5-9, John Dodd, (434) 724-1469, johndodd@centurylink.net; **Vietnam Heli Pilots Assn**

Ohio River LZ Cpt, Louisville, KY, 2/21-23, Bob Hamilton, (502) 845-2914, captbob757@aol.com

COAST GUARD

Androscoggin WHEC 68, St. Pete Beach, FL, 5/18-21, David White, (727) 729-7839, androscogginreunion@tampabay.rr.com; **Campbell WPG 32/WMEC 909**, Portland, ME, 5/5-9, Bob Dell, (602) 222-4645, rbard1@verizon.net; **Lightship Sailors Assn**, Charleston, SC, 10/13-16, Bill Quigley, (603) 966-8690, wanderingmanitook1@aol.com

JOINT

2nd Bn 94th Arty 175/8-inch & 3rd Mar Div, I Corps (Vietnam, 1966-1972), Gettysburg, PA, 9/29-10/2, Jim Lary, (501) 834-9777, jlary@usa.net; **Alaska Mil Vets**, St. Louis, 9/8-12, Don Retchlag, (847) 608-4570

MARINES

2-56 Basic Class, Savannah, GA, 4/24-27, Robert Painter, (732) 341-3213, r.painter@comcast.net; **9th Eng Bn**, Tysons Corner, VA, 5/28-6/1, Herb Shaw, (912) 424-9084, hshaw@bellsouth.net; **I Co 3-7**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 4/30-5/3, Dennis Deibert, (717) 652-1695; **Kilo Btry 4th Bn 13th Mar**, Lawton, OK, 6/4-8, Allan Cruz, (925) 939-9371, allanfpcruz@aol.com; **Mar Air Traffic Cont Assn**, Rapid City, SD, 9/10-14, Robert Young, (605) 382-5247, mudcreek@nrcvtv.com; **Mar Brks Fort Meade/NSA**, Gettysburg, PA, 4/11-13, Ralph Lee, (717) 770-4774, ralph.lee@marines.usmc.mil; **Plt 2001 (MCRD San Diego, 1962)**, Marion, IL, 10/5-8, George Kudlinski, (618) 997-3191, polishprince@frontier.com; **Plt 217 (Parris Island, SC, Jan-Mar 1966)**, Beauford, SC, 3/1-15, Milton Bice, (205) 822-7886, tajbice@att.net; **Rose Garden Mar (Nam Phong, Thailand)**, Kansas City, KS, 5/23-26, John Tabarrini, (951) 880-3634, jpwwoody51@gmail.com; **US Seagoing Mar Assn**, Pensacola, FL, 9/23-27, Charlie Sanford, (520) 825-5400, csan592864@aol.com; **USMC HAWK Assn**, New Bern, NC, 5/19-22, Stan Buliszyn, (352) 509-2043, sb353@usmchawkassociation.com

NAVY

Aucilla AO 56, Tampa, FL, 5/1-5, Anthony K. Flynn, (386) 671-1988, tyga141@aol.com; **Camp DER 251**, Charleston, SC, 9/28-10/1, Gail Sweeden, (865) 482-7981, gsweeden@att.net; **Cogswell DD 651**, San Diego, 10/20-22, George Overman, (760) 889-2216, secretary@usscogswell.com; **Corpsmen United**, Pensacola, FL, 10/27-31, Kenneth Buster, (501) 691-0373, kbuster@suddenlink.net; **Cusk SS 348**, Deadwood, SD, 9/7-11, Delmer Wetering, (605) 368-2432, dswwetering@aol.com; **Dennis J. Buckley DD/DDR 808**, Virginia Beach, VA, 9/28-10/1, Ken Stone, (740) 965-1886, kjstone@aol.com; **England DDG/CG 22**, Mobile, AL, 10/9-12, R.J. Lundgren, (319) 493-2541, staghobob@aim.com;

Fletcher DD/DDE 445, Columbus, GA, 10/6-10, Earl Faubion, (405) 833-7372, dd445@cox.net; **Heli Support Sqdn 7 (HC-7)**, Seattle, 6/4-6, Bud Cole, (360) 871-3944; **Houston CL 81**, Norfolk, VA, 10/20-25, Donna Rogers, (717) 792-9113, dlr7110@yahoo.com; **Howard W. Gilmore AS 16**, Savannah, GA, 5/8-12, Francis Judy, (814) 432-8194, gjjudy@verizon.net; **Independence CVA 62**, Norfolk, VA, 10/1-5, Denis Bagley, (828) 648-7379, ussindycva-62@hotmail.com; **Knapp DD 653**, San Antonio, 5/19-21, Pete Smith, (309) 266-9391, eps@mtco.com; **Leahy DLG 16**, Branson, MO, 9/15-17, Bob Jeffries, (574) 268-7678, bljeffries@embarqmail.com; **MCB 40**, Springfield, IL, 4/3-6, Ed Holston, (856) 358-0916, nmcbfighting40@aol.com; **MCB 133 Charlie Co (1967-1969)**, Branson, MO, 4/30-5/4, Bobby Bryant, (918) 399-3026, okdistrict5acmdr@gmail.com

Naval Cryptologic Vets, Mobile, AL, 5/14-17, Steve Roberts, (850) 944-8559; **Norris DD/DDE 859**, Savannah, GA, 9/25-28, Ed Mehl, (302) 541-0685, e.mehl@mchsi.com; **Randolph CVA/CVS 15**, Newport News, VA, 9/21-28, Sal Rizzo, (321) 454-2344, kenmendelcva15@gmail.com; **Rasher SS/SSR/AGSS 269**, St. Louis, 5/14-19, Robert Bidon, (507) 263-3882, rjbndonsr@connect.com; **Savannah AOR 4**, Savannah, GA, 11/9-14, Ray Heinrich, (252) 715-3132, aor4ray@yahoo.com; **Shangri-La CV/CVA/CVS 38**, San Antonio, 6/23-28, Bob Hayner, (732) 458-2261, shangdc36567@yahoo.com; **Sierra AD 18**, Deerfield, IL, 10/9-12, Bill Skillin, (816) 584-0055, bjskill6299@sbcglobal.net; **Takelma ATF 113**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 9/4-7, Dick Schreifels, (651) 455-1876, richard_rosemary@msn.com

Terror CM 5, Newport News, VA, 9/21-28, Sal Rizzo, (321) 454-2344, kenmendelcva15@gmail.com; **Thomas A. Edison SSBN/SSN 610**, Boston, 9/16-21, Dana Sweetser, (978) 777-0159, dana610skss@aol.com; **Trathen DD 530**, Washington, 10/15-19, Ron Keeler, (843) 795-1484, ronksc@att.net; **VC-35/VA(AW)-35**, Pensacola, FL, 5/12-15, John Clark, (913) 764-6546, big_john3@sbcglobal.net; **VRF-31/32**, St. Augustine Beach, FL, 5/12-15, Gale Downs, (904) 707-5568, gadcpa@comcast.net; **Wasp VS-31**, New Orleans, 11/28-12/6, Carroll Towell, (870) 351-5435, junetowell@yahoo.com; **Zellars DD 777**, Omaha, NE, 9/8-12, Otto Husak, (402) 551-4351, skay101709@cox.net

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24th Inf Div Charlie Co 4th Plt 19th Rgt (Korea, 1950-1951) William Heller, (856) 494-3638
49th FIS (Dow AFB, Bangor, ME & Hanscom Field, Bedford, ME), Henry Salustro, (781) 724-6195
61st FA Bn, Patricia Stewart, (812) 894-2802, wesps@aol.com
86th Black Hawk Inf Div Org (Europe & Philippines, 1942-1946), Bob Bookbinder, (954) 974-3511, carconed@aol.com
179th Finance Sect (Yokohama, Japan, 1948-1949), Dick Jackson, (740) 362-6080, arjay302@columbus.rr.com
498th Bomb Sqdn (Langley AFB, VA, 1954-1957), Richard "Dick" Potts, (219) 285-2690
577th Eng Bn (Vietnam, 1966-1972), Jim Stevens, (704) 363-5358, jrs562@aol.com
663rd FA Bn 280 mm (Okinawa, Japan, 1955-1956), Ronald Chipley, (859) 548-4723
708th MP Bn C Co (Fort Devens, MA, 1944-1946), William Heller, (856) 494-3638
3906th USAF Hosp (Sidi Slimane, Morocco, 1961-1962), Dick Prinzing, (815) 874-9654, prinzingsofrockford2@frontier.com
5060th AF Hosp (Ladd AFB/Fort Wainwright, AK, Sept 1959-Mar 1961), Steve Knopf, (215) 425-9154
6348th Cbt Support Sqdn Air Police Det 5 (Hakata, Japan, 1963-1966) Don O'Neil, (630) 201-9041, do140@aol.com
A 1/26 Marines (Khe Sanh, Vietnam, May-June 1967), Ken Sanders, (256) 878-6153, 19kgs65@gmail.com
Anchorage LSD 36 (1971-1972), Russell Johnson, (724) 894-0115
Assn of Navy Supply Ratings - All Current and Former SK, AK, LS, MS, CS, SH, DK, DP & PC, Gary Gilbert, pegasus0261@aol.com
Co 413 (NTC Great Lakes, IL, Sept 1958), Larry Everett, cwocgret@hotmail.com
Co 41-34 (NTC San Diego, March 1941), John Clark, (913) 764-6546, big_john3@sbcglobal.net
Co 51-085 (NTC San Diego, Jan 1951), James Dotson, (912) 355-1968
Co 740 (NTC San Diego, 1966), James Turner, (850) 640-1551, turnermary31@yahoo.com

D Btry 6th Msl Bn 52nd Arty (HAWK) (Wertheim, Germany, 1961-1963), Michael Baldassaro, (732) 750-1934
D Det 177th Co ASA (Korea, 1958-1959), Ed Erickson, (651) 423-2357
Firebase Ripcord 101st Abn (Vietnam, 1970), Walter Juszczak, (304) 387-2468, farmer64@hotmail.com
HQ Btry 4th Msl Bn 6th Arty (Spangdahlem, Germany, 1960-1963), Larry Camp, (419) 898-7931, larryc.fpm@hotmail.com
Plt 1040 (MCRD San Diego, July-Sept 1968), Stephen Norpel, (563) 451-8417, snorpel@yahoo.com
Richardson AP 118 "R" Div, Bob Viera, 180 Adams St., Fairhaven, MA 02719
Tattnall DDG 19 (1961-1991), Richard Harmon, (386) 235-8723, dharmonlpga1@aol.com
VMF/VMA-211 2nd MAW (1958-1988), Joseph Kalil, (317) 627-6005, joe.kal75@att.net
VR-24 (Hendon, England, 1947-1950), William Heller, (856) 494-3638
YMS 382 (June 6, 1944), Robert Cronin, (978) 468-7784

TAPS

Lloyd L. Habermann, Dept. of Wisconsin. Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1986-1992.
Arthur E. Rupert, Dept. of Washington. Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 1977-1979, Nat'l Americanism Cmsn. Memb. 1985-1991, Nat'l Americanism Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1979-1981, Nat'l Cemetery Cmte. Nat'l Cmdr.'s Rep. 1981-1983 and Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1979-1981.
Charles Scott Sr., Dept. of Mississippi. Dept. Cmdr. 2005-2006, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1994-2005 and 2006-2013, and Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Memb. 2013.
Jessie Earl Simpson, Dept. of South Carolina. Dept. Cmdr. 1988-1989, Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1989-1992 and Nat'l Conv. Resolution Assignment Cmte. Memb. 1992-2001.



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I started a book on levitation the other day, and couldn't put it down.

AN OLD MAN visiting his family asked his granddaughter if he could read her newspaper.

"This is the 21st century," she replied. "We don't waste money on newspapers. Here, use my iPad."

The fly never knew what hit it.

A LOCAL BARTENDER believed he was the strongest man around. To prove it, the bar had a standing \$1,000 bet: the bartender would squeeze a lemon until all the juice ran into a glass, then give the lemon to a patron. Anyone who could squeeze out one more drop would win the money.

Weight lifters, longshoremen and others tried, but no one could do it. One night, a scrawny man came into the bar and said, "I'd like to try the bet." Everyone laughed as the bartender squeezed the lemon and handed it over, but the bar went silent as the man squeezed out six more drops.

"What do you do for a living?" the bartender asked. "Lumberjack? Ninja?"

"IRS agent."

A DEFENDANT entered the courtroom wearing a curly wig, a big red nose and large, floppy shoes. The jury found him legally inane.

ON THE FIRST DAY of school, a kindergarten teacher told her class, "If anyone has to use the bathroom, hold up two fingers."

A small voice from the back of the room asked, "How will that help?"



"I'm a victim of my own success. Who should I sue?"



"Well, I think we're all in agreement. That's one funky rash!"

IT GOT SO COLD last week that my grandfather's teeth were chattering – and they were at home on his dresser.

ONE OLD MAN asked another, "Were any of your boyish ambitions realized?"

"Yes," the other man replied. "When I was a child, and my mother cut my hair, I often dreamed of being bald."

THE EARLY BIRD catches the worm. But that doesn't say much for the early worm, does it?

"PRESIDENT OBAMA is wrestling with the health-care rollout debacle. He urged Americans not to be put off by the Obamacare website and offered alternative ways to enroll, such as using the mail. Then the president got on his horse and rode off to spread the news to the next town."

– Conan O'Brien





GRANUFLO IN DIALYSIS PATIENTS



We have learned from a series of investigations that GranuFlo, an alkaline substance given to dialysis patients to neutralize the acid that builds up in the blood, can increase serious health risks associated with dialysis.

GranuFlo Recall

In June 2012, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a Class I recall of GranuFlo Dry Acid Concentrate and Naturalyte Liquid, a dialysis product used in the treatment of acute and chronic renal (kidney) failure during hemodialysis. **Class I recalls are used for dangerous or defective products that may cause serious health problems or even death.**

GranuFlo, manufactured by Fresenius Medical Care, has been found to contain far more acetate than rival products, resulting in elevated bicarbonate levels – a significant risk factor for cardiac arrest in dialysis patients.

If you or a loved one has experienced a cardiac event, stroke, or death following the use of GranuFlo, then you may be entitled to compensation. The Branch Law Firm, a nationally known law firm, is handling these types of cases and specifically representing clients on a national basis regarding GranuFlo. Call for a confidential interview, **1-800-828-4529** or **1-800-243-3534** and visit our website at **www.branchlawfirm.com**.

Turner W. Branch, a principal and senior partner of the Branch Law Firm, retired as a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1968. He served on active duty in Camp Pendleton, California and at the Marine Corps Air Facility (MCAF) in Santa Ana, California. While at Camp Pendleton he served with the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division (FMF) USMC.

ACTOS®, also known as pioglitazone, is a medication prescribed for Type II Diabetes, manufactured by the Japanese company Takeda Pharmaceutical Company. Takeda began a 10-year epidemiological study to determine the safety of Actos®. During the five-year interim analysis of the study in **August 2011**, the results found that there was a **40% increased risk of bladder cancer**.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning to all physicians prescribing Actos®. The FDA is also aware of a recent epidemiological study conducted in France, which suggests an increased risk of bladder cancer with pioglitazone. Based on the results of this study, France has suspended the use of pioglitazone and Germany has recommended not to start pioglitazone in new patients.

If you, a family member, or a loved one has bladder cancer and has ACTOS®, you may be entitled to compensation. Please **contact the Branch Law Firm**, a well-known national law firm that has been in business over 45 years, for a **free initial interview** and **consultation**.

Call today, the **Branch Law Firm**, **1-800-828-4529**
or visit our website at **www.branchlawfirm.com**.

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